The saint MYSTERY MAGAZINE

OCT.
35c

Edited by LESLIE CHARTERIS

IN THIS ISSUE

CORNELL WOOLRICH

BRUNO FISCHER

JULIAN SYMONS

RICHARD DEMING

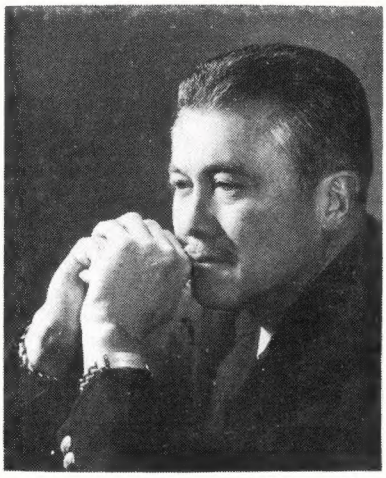
JUDITH MERRIL

- Watch for The SAINT on T V -

The Russian Prisoner

A NEW SAINT STORY by LESLIE CHARTERIS

SOME OLD, SOME NEW — THE FINEST IN MYSTERY FICTION



The following is an appraisal of my last book attributed to one Lois Wilson "of *The Miami News* Staff":

> A big disapppointment is the latest Leslie Charteris collection of Simon Templar stories. TRUST THE SAINT is one big blah compared with earlier stories where lots of dead bodies and action took the Saint all over the globe Either Mr. Charteris is slowing up as he gets older or I'm getting bloodthirsty in my old age.

You may ask why I choose to quote such uncomplimentary remarks instead of the words of praise pronounced by other kinder critics. The answer obviously is that I am not crazy enough to take issue with anyone who gives me a good notice, but on the other hand it would hardly be seemly to preen myself in public for being patted on the back.

Fortunately I am not afraid that a wider dissemination of the above disparagement will hurt the sales. Many of you have already read most of the stories anyhow, when they first appeared in this Magazine, and if you bought the volume it would only be from a sentimental desire to preserve them in a more permanent binding. Conversely, I long ago ceased to believe that good reviews would sell a book. I have always considered my translation of JUAN BELMONTE, KILLER OF BULLS: *The Autobiography of a Matador,* my most serious literary achievement, and it was greeted both in England and America with rave notices spread over whole columns and even pages of the most distinguished supplements and periodicals, utterly eclipsing the best that was ever said about the Saint; but nobody bought it, perhaps because at that time it had not yet become fashionable to understand bullfighting.

I do not know what qualifications Miss or (Mrs.) Wilson can claim as an assessor of mystery stories, other than her undeniable right to her own personal opinions. If the locales of these stories, which visit only England, Scotland, France, Germany, Sweden, and Denmark, are not glamorously global enough for her, that is her privilege. If the action, which includes only kidnapping, seduction, murder, a duel with a rhinosceros, and an even more eerie encounter which I cannot go into without spoiling a climax for anyone who may not yet have read it, is one big blah to her, she is entitled to yell for lustier fare.

But what does bug me is that the newspaper which gives her the space and circulation to play literary oracle, regardless of what harm it might do to writers who do not have my opportunity to answer back, frequently donates still more space (like any other civic-minded journal) to airing all the organized indignation about the evil influence of the popular presentation of crime and violence in television, comic strips, and magazines—some of which are quite likely written, in the line of duty, by Lois (Bloodthirsty) Wilson herself.

If we weren't plenty tough in our own way, we'd be saying: "What's the use? You can't win, can you?"

Leslie Charteris

The® saint
MYSTERY MAGAZINE

OCTOBER, 1963
VOL. 19, NO. 4

The Russian Prisoner 3
by LESLIE CHARTERIS

The Night of February 17, 1924 23
by CORNELL WOOLRICH

Muted Hunger 51
by JUDITH MERRIL

The Saint on TV 64
A MONTHLY COLUMN

The Case of S.W.2 66
by JULIAN SYMONS

Syndicate Bait 73
by PAUL W. FAIRMAN

Five O'Clock Menace 80
by BRUNO FISCHER

The Man Who Chose the Devil 90
by RICHARD DEMING

Letter to the Editor 125
by MORRIS HERSHMAN

Leslie Charteris
Supervising Editor

Hans Stefan Santesson
Editor

THE SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE, Oct., 1963, Vol. 19, No. 4. Published monthly by FICTION PUBLISHING COMPANY, 30 East 42nd Street, New York 17, New York, by arrangement with Saint Magazines, Inc. Single copy price, 35c. Subscriptions in U.S. and Canada, $4.00 per year. Subscription in foreign countries, $5.00 per year. Names of people and places are fictitious and any use of the name of an actual person or place is purely coincidental. Printed in U.S.A. Copyright 1963 by Fiction Publishing Company.

HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO GET YOUR COPY OF THE saint MYSTERY MAGAZINE EACH MONTH?

if you want the greatest possbile variety within the entire range of mystery, detective and crime fiction by the most eminent and most imaginative and capable writers . . . . . *Subscribe to* saint

if tables of contents multiple-starred with the names of such greats as John Dickson Carr, Sax Rohmer, E. Phillips Oppenheim, Agatha Christie, Baynard Kendrick, Craig Rice, Philip Wylie and many others . . . plus a COMPLETE MYSTERY each month by LESLIE CHARTERIS—creator of the SAINT, one of the most popular characters in fiction today, give you a thrill . . . *Subscribe to* saint

if you're having trouble finding THE saint on your newsstand and you want to be sure of getting us regularly and on time . . . THEN . . . just clip the coupon below and mail it to us together with your check or money order — and THE saint MYSTERY MAGAZINE will arrive on time each month.

FICTION PUBLISHING COMPANY
30 East 42nd St., New York 17, N. Y.
Kindly enter my subscription for THE SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE.
One year (12 issues) at $4.00 ☐ Two years (24 issues) at $7.00 ☐
3 years (36 issues) at $9.00 ☐
Additional postage: Foreign $1.00 per year
Please remit by check or money order

NAME .....
ADDRESS .....
CITY, ZONE, STATE .....
Please Print

1063

the russian prisoner

by Leslie Charteris

"Excuse me. You are the Saint. You must help me."

By that time Simon Templar thought he must have heard all the approaches, all the elegant variations. Some were amusing, some were insulting, some were unusual, most were a routine, a few tried selfconsciously to be original and attention-getting. He had, regrettably, become as accustomed to them as any Arthurian knight-errant must eventually have become. After all, how many breeds of dragons were there? And how many different shapes and colorations of damsels in distress?

This one would have about chalked up her first quarter-century, and would have weighed in at about five pounds per annum – not the high-fashion model's ratio, but more carnally interesting. She had prominent cheek bones to build shadow frames around blindingly light blue eyes, and flax-white hair that really looked as if it had been born with her and not processed later. She was beautiful like some kind of mythological ice-maiden.

And she had the distinction of having condensed a sequence of

SIMON TEMPLAR WAS USED TO BEING ASKED FOR HELP — BUT NOT FOR THE REWARD THIS CASE MIGHT HAVE EARNED HIM.

inescapable cliches to a quintessence which could only have been surpassed by a chemical formula.

"Do sit down," Simon said calmly. "I'm sure your problem is desperate, or you wouldn't be bringing it to a perfect stranger —but have you heard of an old English duck called Drake? When they told him the Spanish Armada was coming, he insisted on finishing his game of bowls before he'd go out to cope with it. I've got a rather nice bowl here myself, and it would be a shame to leave it."

He carefully fixed a cube of coarse farmhouse bread on the small tines of his long-shafted fork, and dipped it in the luscious goo that barely bubbled in the chafing dish before him. When it was soaked and coated to its maximum burthen, he transferred it neatly to his mouth. Far from being an ostentatious vulgarity, this was a display of epicurean technique and respect, for he was eating *fondue* —perhaps the most truly national of Swiss delectables, that ambrosial blend of melted cheese perfumed with kirsch and other things, which is made nowhere better than at the Old Swiss House in Lucerne, where he was lunching.

"I like that," she said.

He pushed the bread plate towards her and offered a fork, hospitably.

"Have some."

"No, thank you. I mean that I like the story about Drake. And I like it that you are the same —a man who is so sure of himself that he does not have to get excited. I have already had lunch. I was inside, and I could see you through the window. Some people at the next table recognized you and were talking about you. I heard the name, and it was like winning a big prize which I had not even hoped for."

She spoke excellent English, quickly, but in a rather stilted way that seemed to have been learned from books or vocal drill rather than light conversation, with an accent which he could not place immediately.

"A glass of wine, then? Or a liqueur?"

"A Benedictine, if you like. And some coffee, may I?"

He beckoned a waitress who happened to come out, and gave the order.

"You seem to know something about me," he said, spearing another piece of bread. "Is one supposed to know something about you, or are you a Mystery Woman?"

"I am Irma Jorovitch."

"Good for you. It doesn't have to be your real name, but at least it gives me something to call you." He speared another chunk of bread. "Now, you tell me your trouble. It's tedious, but

we have to go through this in most of my stories, because I'm only a second-rate mind reader."

"I am Russian, originally," she said. "My family are from the part of Finland where the two countries meet, but since nineteen-forty it has been all Soviet. My father is Karel Jorovitch, and he was named for the district we came from. He is a scientist."

"Any particular science, or just a genius?"

"I don't know. He is a professor at the University of Leningrad. Of physics, I think. I do not remember seeing him except in pictures. During the war, my mother was separated from him, and she escaped with me to Sweden."

"You don't have a Swedish accent."

"Perhaps because I learnt English first from her, and I suppose she had a Finnish or a Russian accent. Then there were all sorts of teachers in Swedish schools. I speak everything like a mixture. But I learnt enough languages to get a job in a travel agency in Stockholm. My father could not get permission to leave Russia after the war, and my mother had learned to prefer the capitalist life and would not go back to join him. I don't think she was too much in love with him. At last there was a divorce, and she married a man with a small hotel in Goteborg, who adopted me so that I could have a passport and travel myself. But soon after, they were both killed in a car accident."

"I see . . . or do I? Your problem is that you don't know how to run a hotel?"

"No, that is for his own sons. But I thought that my father should be told that she was dead. I wrote to him, and somehow he received the letter—he was still at the University. He wrote back, wanting to know all about me. We began to write often. Now I didn't even have a mother, I had nobody, it was exciting to discover a real father and try to find out all about him. But then, one day, I got another letter from him which had been smuggled out, which was different from all the others."

The Saint sipped his wine. It was a native Johannisberg Rhonegold, light and bone-dry, the perfect punctuation for the glutinous goodness into which he was dunking.

"How different?"

"He said he could not stand it any more, the way he was living and what he was doing, and he wished he could escape to the West. He asked if I would be ready to help him. Of course I said yes. But how? We exchanged several letters, discussing possibilities, quite apart from the other letters which he went on writing for the censors to read."

"How did you work that?"

"Through the travel agency, it was not so hard to find ways. And at last the opportunity came. He was to be sent to Geneva, to a meeting of the disarmament conference — not to take part himself, but to be on hand to advise the Soviet delegate about scientific questions. It seemed as if everything was solved. He only had to get out of the Soviet embassy, here in Switzerland, and he would be free."

The Saint's gaze was no longer gently quizzical. His blue eyes, many southern shades darker than hers, had hardened as if sapphires were crystallizing in them. He was listening now with both ears and all his mind; but he went on eating with undiminished deference to the cuisine.

"So what's the score now?"

"I came here to meet him with money, and to help him. When he escaped, of course, he would have nothing. And he speaks only Russian and Finnish . . . But something went wrong."

"What, exactly?"

"I don't know."

Until then, she had been contained, precise, reciting a symopsis that she must have vowed to deliver without emotion, to acquit herself in advance of the charge of being just another hysterical female with helpful hallucinations. But now she was leaning across the table towards him, twisting her fingers together and letting her cold lovely face be twisted into unbecoming lines of tortured anxiety.

"Someone betrayed us. We had to trust many people who carried our letters. Who knows which one? I only know that yesterday, when he was to do it, I waited all day up the street where I could watch the entrance, in a car which I had hired, and in the evening he came out. But not by himself, as we had planned. He was driven out in an embassy car, sitting between two men who looked like gangsters—the secret police! I could only just recognize him, from a recent photograph he had sent me, looking around desperately as if he hoped to see me, as if I could have rescued him."

Her coffee and Benedictine arrived, and Simon said to the waitress: "You can bring me the same, in about five minutes."

He harpooned a prize corner crust, and set about mopping the dish clean of the last traces of *fondue*. He said: "You should have got here sooner. There's an old Swiss tradition which says that when *fondue* is being eaten, anyone who loses the bread off their fork has to kiss everyone else at the table. It must make for nice sociable eating . . . So what happened?"

"I followed them. It was all I could think of. If I lost him then, I knew I would lose him for

ever. I thought at first they were taking him to the airport, to send him back to Russia, and I could make a fuss there. But no. They went to Lausanne, then on to here, and then still farther, to a house on the lake, with high walls and guards, and they took him in. . . Then I went to the police."

"And?"

"They told me they could do nothing. It was part of the Soviet embassy, officially rented for diplomatic purposes, and it could not be touched. The Russians can do whatever they like there, as if they were in Russia. And I know what they are doing. They are keeping my father there until they can send him back to Moscow—and then to Siberia. Unless they kill him first."

"Wouldn't that have been easier from Geneva?"

"There is another airport at Zurich, almost as close from this house, and without the newspaper men who will be at Geneva for the conference."

Letting his eyes wander around the quiet little square, Simon thought that you really had to have a paperback mind to believe tales like that in such a setting. The table where they sat outside the restaurant was under the shade of the awning, but he could have stretched a hand out into the sunshine which made it the kind of summer's day that travel brochures are always photographed on. And gratefully enjoying their full advertised money's worth, tourists of all shapes and sizes and nationalities were rambling back and forth, posing each other for snapshots, plodding in and out of the domed Panorama building opposite to peer (for reasons comprehensible only to tourists and the entrepreneurs who provide such attractions for them) at its depiction of the French general Bourbaki's entry into Switzerland in 1871 on a scale that seems somewhat disproportionate to the historic importance of that event, or trudging up the hill to gawk at the Lion Memorial carved in the rock to commemorate the Swiss mercenaries who died in Paris with unprofitable heroism defending the Tuileries against the French Revolution, or to the Glacier Garden above that which preserves the strange natural sculpture of much more ancient turnings—all with their minds happily emptied of everything but the perennial vacation problem of paying for their extra extravagances and souvenirs. Not one of them, probably, would have believed in this plot unless they saw it at home on television. But the Saint knew perhaps better than any man living how thinly the crust of peace and normalcy covered volcanic lavas everywhere in the modern world.

He turned back to Irma Jorovitch, and his voice was just as tolerantly good-humored as it had been ever since she had intruded herself with her grisly reminder of what to him were only the facts of life. He said: "And you think it should be a picnic for me to rescue him."

She said: "Not a picnic. No. But if any man on earth can do it, you can."

"You know, you could be right. But I was trying to take a holiday from all that."

"If you would want money," she said, "I have nothing worth your time to offer. But I could try to get it. I would do anything — *anything*!"

It was altogether disgraceful, but he could do nothing to inhibit an inward reflex of response except try not to think about it.

"Gentleman adventurers aren't supposed to take advantage of offers like that," he said, with unfeigned regret.

"You must help me," she said again. "Please."

He sighed.

"All right," he said. "I suppose I must."

Her face lit up with a gladness that did the same things for it that the Aurora Borealis does to the arctic snows. It was a reaction that he had seen many times, as if his mere consent to have a bash had vaporized all barriers. It would have been fatally intoxicating if he ever forgot how precariously, time after time, he had succeeded in justifying so much faith.

"It isn't done yet, darling," he reminded her. "Tell me more about this house."

It was on the southern shore of the Vierwaldstattersee, he learned, the more rugged and less accessible side which rises to the mingled tripper-traps and tax dodgers chalets of Burgenstock, and by land it was reachable only by a second-to-secondary road which served nothing but a few other similarly isolated hermitages. Although it was dark when she passed it, she was sure there was no other residence near by, so that anyone approaching in daylight would certainly be under observation long before he got close. The walls around the grounds were about seven feet high, topped with barbed wire, but with slits that the inmates could peep through—to say nothing of what electronic devices might augment their vigilance. Added to which, she had heard dogs barking as she drove past.

"Nothing to it," said the Saint —"if I hadn't forgotten to bring my invisible and radar-proof helicopter."

"You will think of something," she said with rapturous confidence.

He lighted a cigarette and meditated for almost a minute.

"You say this house is right on the lake?"

"Yes. Because at the next turning I passed, my headlights showed the water."

"Do you think you could recognize it again, from the lake side?"

"I think so."

"Good. Then let's take a little boat ride."

He paid his bill, and finished his coffee while he waited for the change. Then they walked down the Lowenstrasse and across the tree-shaded promenades of the Nationalquai to the lake front. Just a few yards to the left there was a small marina offering a variety of water craft for hire, which he had already casually scouted without dreaming that he would ever use it in this way. With the same kind of companionship, perhaps, but not for this kind of mission. . .

The Saint chose a small but comfortably upholstered runabout, the type of boat that would automatically catch the eye of a man who was out to impress a pretty girl—and that was precisely how he wanted them to be categorized by anyone who had a motive for studying them closely. Taking advantage of the weather and the informal customs of the country, he was wearing only a pair of light slacks and a tartan sport shirt, and Irma was dressed in a simple white blouse and gaily patterned dirndl, so that there was nothing except their own uncommon faces to differentiate them from any other holiday-making twosome.

And as he aimed the speedboat diagonally southeastwards across the lake, with the breeze of their own transit tousling her short white-blond hair and moulding the filmy blouse like a tantalizing second skin against the thrusting mounds of her breasts, he had leisure to wish that they had been brought together by nothing more preemptive than one of those random holiday magnetisms which provide inexhaustible grist for the world's marriage and divorce mills in self-compensating proportions.

She had put on a pair of sunglasses when they left the restaurant, and out on the water the light was strong enough for Simon to take out a pair of his own which had been tucked in his shirt pocket. But they would be useful for more than protection against the glare.

"Get the most out of these cheaters when we start looking for the house," he told her as he put them on. "Don't turn your head and look at anything directly: just turn your eyes and keep facing somewhere else. Behind the glasses, anybody watching us won't be able to tell what we're really looking at."

"You think of everything. I will try to remember."

"About how far did you drive out of Lucerne to this house?"

"I cannot be sure. It seemed quite far, but the road was winding."

This was so femininely vague that he resigned himself to covering the entire southern shore if necessary. On such an afternoon, and with such a comely companion, it was a martyrdom which he could endure with beatific stoicism. Having reached the nearest probable starting point which he had mentally selected, he cut the engine down to a smooth idling gait and steered parallel to the meandering coast line, keeping a distance of about a hundred yards from the shore.

"Relax, Irma," he said. "Any house that's on this stretch of lake, we'll see. Meanwhile, we should look as if we're just out for the ride."

To improve this visual effect, he lowered himself from his hot-water-rodder's perch on the gunwhale to the cushion behind the wheel, and she snuggled up to him.

"Like this?" she asked seriously.

"More or less," he approved, with fragile gravity, and slipped an arm around her shoulders.

It was only when they had passed Kehrsiten, the landing where the funicular takes off up the sheer palisade to the hotels of Burgenstock on its crest, that he began to wonder if she had overestimated her ability to identify the house to which Karel Jorovitch had been taken from an aspect which she had never seen. But he felt no change of tension in her as the boat purred along for some kilometers after that, until suddenly she stiffened and clutched him—but with the magnificent presence of mind to turn towards him instead of to the shore.

"There, I have seen it!" she gasped. "The white house with the three tall chimneys! I remember them!"

He looked to his right, over her flaxen head which had a disconcertingly pure smell which reminded him somehow of new-mown hay, and saw the only edifice she could have been referring to.

The tingle that went through him was an involuntary psychic-somatic acknowledgement that the adventure had now become real, and he was well and truly hooked.

In order to study the place throughly and unhurriedly, he turned toward Irma, folded her tenderly in his arms, and applied his lips to hers. In that position, he could continue to keep his eyes on the house whilst giving the appearance of being totally preoccupied with radically unconnected pursuits.

It was surprisingly unpretentious, for a diplomatic enclave. He would have taken it for a large old-fashioned family house—or a house for a large old-fashioned family, according to the semantic preference of the phrase-maker. At any rate, it was not a refurbished mansion or a small re-converted hotel. Its most unusual feature was what she had already mentioned: the extraordinarily high wire-topped garden walls which came down at a respectable distance on both sides of it—not merely to the lake edge, but extending about twelve feet out into the water. And for the further discouragement of anyone who might still have contemplated going around them, those two barriers were joined by a rope linking a semicircle of small bright red buoys such as might have marked the limits of a safe bathing area, but which also served to bar an approach to the shore by boat—even if they were not anchored to some underwater obstruction which would have made access altogether impossible.

And on the back porch of the house, facing the lake, a square-shouldered man in a deck chair raised a pair of binoculars and examined them lengthily.

Simon was able to make all these observations in spite of the fact that Irma Jorovitch was cooperating in his camouflage with an ungrudging enthusiasm which was no aid at all to concentration.

Finally they came to a small headland which there was a cove into which he could steer the boat out of sight of the watcher on the porch. Only then did the Saint release her, not without reluctance, and switched off the engine to become crisply business-like again.

"Excuse the familiarity," he said. "But you know why I had to do it."

"I liked it, too," she said demurely.

As the boat drifted to a stop, Simon unstrapped his wristwatch and laid it on the deck over the dashboard. He held his pen upright beside it to cast a shadow from the sun, and turned the watch to align the hour hand with the shadow, while Irma watched fascinated.

"Now, according to my boy scout training, halfway between the hour hand and twelve o'clock on the dial is due south," he explained. "I need a bearing on this place, to be able to come straight to it the next time—and at night."

From there, he could no longer see anything useful of Lucerne. But across the lake, on the north side, he spotted the high peaked roof of the Park Hotel at Viznau, and settled on that as a landmark with multiple advantages. He sighted on it sev-

eral times, until he was satisfied that he had established an angle accurately enough for any need he would have.

"This is all we can do right now," he said. "In broad daylight, we wouldn't have a prayer of getting him out. I don't even know what the odds will be after dark, but I'll try to think of some way to improve them."

The beautiful cold face — which he had discovered could be anything but cold at contact range—was strained and entreating.

"But what if they take him away before tonight?"

"Then we'll have lost a bet," he said grimly. "We could hustle back to Lucerne, get a car, come back here by road—I could find the place now, all right—and mount guard until they try to drive away with him. Then we could try an interception and rescue—supposing he isn't already gone, or they don't take him away even before we get back. On the other hand, they might keep him here for a week, and how could we watch all that time? Instead of waiting, we could be breaking in tonight. . . It's the kind of choice that generals are paid and pilloried for making."

She held her head in her hands.

"What can I say?"

Simon Templar prodded the starter button, and turned the wheel to point the little speedboat back towards Lucerne.

"You'll have to make up your own mind, Irma," he said relentlessly. "It's your father. You tell me, and we'll play it in your key."

There was little conversation on the return drive. The decision could only be left to her. He did not want to influence it, and he was glad it was not up to him, for either alternative seemed to have the same potentiality of being as catastrophically wrong as the other.

When he had brought the boat alongside the dock and helped her out, he said simply: "Well?"

"Tonight," she replied resolutely. "That is the way it must be."

"How did you decide?"

"As you would have, I think. If the nearest man on the dock when we landed wore a dark shirt, I would say 'Tonight'. It was a way of tossing up, without a coin. How else could I choose?"

Simon turned to the man in the blue jersey who was nearest, who was securing the boat to its mooring rings.

"Could we reserve it again tonight?" he inquired in German. "The Fraulein would like to take a run in the moonlight."

"At what time?" asked the attendant, unmoved by romantic visions. "Usually I close up at eight."

"At about nine," said the Saint, ostentatiously unfolding a hundred-franc note from his wad. "I will give you two more of these when I take the boat, and you need not wait for us. I will tie it up safely when we come back."

"*Jawohl, mein Herr!*" agreed the man, with alacrity. "Whenever you come, at nine or later, I shall be here."

Simon and Irma walked back over the planking to the paved promenade where natives and visitors were now crisscrossing, at indicatively different speeds, on their home-ward routes. The sun already dropped below the high horizons to the west, and the long summer twilight would soon begin.

"Suppose we succeed in this crazy project," he said. "Have you thought about what we do next?"

"My father will be free. I will book passage on a plane and take him back to Sweden with me."

"Your father will be free, but will you? And will I? Or for how long? Has it occurred to you, sweetheart, that the Swiss government takes a notoriously dim view of piratical operations on their nice neutral soil, even with the best of motives? And the Russkis won't hesitate to howl their heads off at this violation of their extra-territorial rights."

Her step faltered, and she caught his arm.

"I am so stupid," she said humbly. "I should have thought of that. Instead, I was asking you to become a criminal, to the Swiss Government, instead of a hero. Forgive me." Then she looked up at him in near terror.

"Will you give it up because of that?"

He shook his head, with a shrug and a wry smile.

"I've been in trouble before. I'm always trying to keep out of it, but Fate seems to be agin me."

"Through the travel agency, perhaps I can arrange something to help us to get away. Let me go back to my hotel and make some telephoning."

"Where are you staying?"

"A small hotel, down that way." She pointed vaguely in the general direction of the Schwanenplatz and the older town which lies along the river under the ancient walls which protected it five centuries ago. "It is all I can afford," she said defensively. "I suppose you are staying here? Or at the Palace?"

They were at the corner of Grand National and the Haldenstrasse.

"Here. It's the sort of place where travel bureaux like yours send people like me," he murmured. "So you go home and see what you can organize, and I'll see what I can work out myself. Meet me back here at seven.

I'm in room 129." He flagged a taxi which came cruising by. "Dress up prettily for dinner, but nothing fussy—and bring a sweater, because it'll be chilly later on that that lake."

This time he didn't have to take advantage of a situation. She put up her lips with a readiness which left no doubt as to how far she would have been willing to develop the contact in a less public place.

"See you soon," he said, and closed the taxi door after her, thoughtfully.

He had a lot to think about.

Without unchivalrously depreciating the value of any ideas she might have or phone calls she could make, he would not have been the Saint if he could have relied on them without some independent backing of his own. He had softened in many ways, over the years, but not to the extent of leaving himself entirely in the hands of any female, no matter how entrancing.

By seven o'clock, when she arrived, he had some of the answers; but his plan only went to a certain point and he could not project beyond that.

"I think I've figured a way to get into that house," he told her. "And if the garrison isn't too large and lively we may get out again with your father. But what happens after that depends on how hot the hue and cry may be."

She put down her sweater and purse on one of the beds—she had found her way to his room unannounced, and knocked on the door, and when he opened it she had been there.

"I have been telephoning about that, as I promised," she said. "I have arranged for a hired car and a driver to be at the other end of the lake, closer to the house than this, and just about as close to Zurich. He will drive us to the airport. Then, I have ordered through the travel agency to have a small private plane waiting to fly us all out."

"A private charter plane—how nice and simple," he murmured. "But can you afford it?"

"Of course not. I told them it was for a very rich invalid, with his private nurse and doctor. That will be you and I. When we are in Sweden and they give us the bill I shall have to explain everything, and I shall lose my job, but my father will be safe and they cannot bring us back."

He laughed with honest admiration.

"You're quite amazing."

"Did I do wrong?" She was crestfallen like a child that has been suddenly turned on, in fear of a slap.

"No, I mean it. You worked all that out while you were changing your clothes and fixing

your hair, and you make it sound so easy and obvious. Which it is—now you've told me. But I recognize genius when I see it. And what a lot of footling obstacles disappear when it isn't hampered by scruples!"

"How can I have them when I must save my father's life? But what you have to do is still harder. What is your plan?"

"I'll tell you at dinner."

In an instant she was all feminity again.

"Do I look all right?"

She invited inspection with a ballerina's pirouette. She had put on a simple wool dress that matched her eyes and molded her figure exactly where it should, without vulgar ostentation but clearly enough to be difficult to stop looking at. The Saint did not risk rupturing himself from such an effort.

"You're only sensational," he assured her. "If you weren't, I wouldn't be hooked on this caper."

"Please?"

"I wouldn't be chancing a bullet or a jail sentence to help you."

"I know. How can I thank you?" She reached out and took his right hand in both of hers. "Only to tell you my heart will never forget."

With an impulsively dramatic gesture, she drew his hand to her and placed it directly over her heart. The fact that a somewhat less symbolic organ intervened did not seem to occur to her, but it imposed on him some of the same restraint that a seismograph would require to remain unmoved at the epicenter of an earthquake.

"Don't I still have to earn that?" said the Saint, with remarkable mildness.

When they got to the Mignon Grill at the Palace Hotel on the other side of the Kursaal ("I promised Dino last night I'd come in for his special Lobster Thermidor, before I had any idea what else I'd be doing tonight," Simon explained, "but anyhow we should have one more good meal before they put us on bread and water.") he told her how he was hoping to carry out the abduction; and once again she was completely impersonal and businesslike, listening with intense attention.

"I think it could work," she said at the end, nodding with preternatural gravity. "Unless. . . There is one thing you may not have thought of."

"There could be a dozen," he admitted. "Which one have you spotted?"

"Suppose they have already begun to brain-wash him—so that he does not trust us."

Simon frowned.

"Do you think they could?"

"You know how everyone in a Soviet trial always pleads guilty and begs to be punished? They

have some horrible secret method. . . If they have done it to him, he might not even want to be rescued."

"That would make it a bit sticky," he said reflectively. "I wonder how you un-brain-wash somebody?"

"Only a psychologist would know. But first we must get him to one. If it is like that, you must not hesitate because of me. If you must knock him out, I promise not to become silly and hysterical."

"That'll help anyway," said the Saint grimly.

The baby lobsters were delicious, and he was blessed with the nerveless appetite to enjoy every bite. In fact, the prospect that lay ahead was a celestial seasoning that no chef could have concocted from all the herbs and spices in his pharmacopeia.

But the time came when anticipation could not be prolonged any more, and had to attain reality. They walked back to the Grand National, and he picked up a bag which he had left at the hall porter's desk when they went out. It was one of those handy zippered plastic bags with a shoulder strap which airlines emblazon with their insignia and distribute to overseas passengers to be stuffed with all those odds and ends which travellers never seem able to get into their ordinary luggage, and Simon had packed it with requisites for their expedition which would have been fatal to the elegant drape of his coat if he had tried to crowd all of them into various pockets. The boat was waiting at the marina, and in a transition that seemed to flow with the smoothness of a cinematic effect they were aboard and on their way into the dark expanse of the lake.

Simon followed the shore line to Viznau before he turned away to the right. From his bag he had produced a hiker's luminous compass, with the aid of which he was able to set a sufficiently accurate course to retrace the makeshift bearing he had taken that afternoon between his wrist watch and the sun. He opened the throttle, and the boat lifted gently and skimmed. Irma Jorovitch put on her cardigan and buttoned it, keeping down in the shelter of the windshield. They no longer talked, for it would only have been idle chatter.

The water was liquid glass, dimpling lazily to catch the reflection of a light or a star, except where the wake stretched behind like a trail of swift-melt-snow. Above the blackness ahead, the twinkling facades of Burgenstock high against the star-powdered sky were a landmark this time to be kept well towards the starboard beam. Halfway across, as best he could

judge it, he broke the first law by switching off the running lights, but there were no other boats out there to threaten a collision. Then when the scattered lights on the shore ahead drew closer he slackened speed again to let the engine noise sink to a soothing purr that would have been scarcely audible from the shore, or at least vague enough to seem distant and unalarming.

He thought he should have earned full marks for navigation. The three tall chimneys that he had to find rose black against the Milky Way as he came within perception range of curtained windows glowing dimly over the starboard bow, and he cruised softly on beyond them into the cove where he had paused on the afternoon reconnaissance.

This time, however, he let the boat drift all the way in to the shore where his cat's eyes could pick out a tiny promontory that was almost as good as a private pier. He jumped off as the bow touched, carrying the anchor, which he wedged down into a crevice to hold the boat snugly against the land.

Back in the boat, he stripped quickly down to the swimming trunks which he had worn under his clothes. From the airline bag he took a pair of wire-cutting pliers, and one of those bulky "pocket" knives equipped with a small tool-shop of gadgets besides the conventional blades, which he stuffed securely under the waistband of his trunks. Then came a flashlight, which he gave to Irma, and a small automatic pistol.

"Do you know how to use this, if you have to?" he asked.

"Yes. And I shall not be afraid to. I have done a lot of shooting—for sport."

"The safety catch is here."

He gave her the gun and guided her thumb to feel it.

She put it in her bag, and then he helped her ashore.

"The road has to be over there," he said, "and it has to take you to the gates which you saw from your car. You can't possibly go wrong. And you remember what we worked out. Your car has broken down, and you want to use their phone to call a garage."

"How could I forget? And when they don't want to let me in, I shall go on talking and begging as long as I can."

"I'm sure you can keep them listening for a while, at any rate. Is your watch still the same as mine?" They put their wrists together and she turned on the flashlight for an instant. "Good. Just give me until exactly half-past before you go into action. . . . Good luck!"

"Good luck," she said; and her arms went around him and her lips searched for his once more before he turned away.

The water that he waded into was cold enough to quench any wistful ardor that might have distracted his concentration from the task ahead. He swam very hard, to stimulate his circulation, until his system had struck a balance with the chill, out and around the western arm of the little bay; and then as he curved his course towards the house with the three chimneys he slackened his pace to reduce the churning sounds of motion, until by the time he was within earshot of anyone in the walled garden he was sliding through the water as silently as an otter.

By that time his eyes had accomodated to the darkness so thoroughly that he could see one of the dogs sniffing at a bush at one corner of the back porch, but he did not see any human sentinel. And presently the dog trotted off around the side of the house without becoming aware of his presence.

Simon touched the rope connecting two of the markerbuoys enclosing the private beach, feeling around it with a touch like a feather, but he could detect no wire intertwined with it. If there were any alarm device connected with it, therefore, it was probably something mechanically attached to the ends which would be activated by any tug on the rope. The Saint took great care not to do this as he cut through it with the blade of his boy-scout knife. But hardly a hand's breadth below the surface of the water, making the passage too shallow to swim through, his delicately exploring fingers traced a barrier of stout wire netting supported by the bloys and stretched between their moorings, which would have rudely halted any small boat that tried to shoot in to the shore. He could feel that the wire was bare, apparently not electrified, but just in case it might also be attached to some warning trigger he touched it no less gingerly as he used his wire-cutters to snip out a section large enough to let him float through.

The luminous dial of his watch showed that he still had almost five minutes to spare from the time he had allowed himself. He waited patiently, close to the projecting side wall, until the first dog barked on the other side of the house.

A moment later, the other one chimed in.

A man came out of the back door and descended the verandah steps, peering to left and right in the direction of the lake. But coming from the lighted house, it would have to take several minutes for his pupils to dilate sufficiently for his retinas to detect a half-submerged dark head drifting soundlessly shorewards in the star-shadow of the wall. Secure in that physiological

certainty, the Saint paddled silently on into the lake bank, using only his hands like fins and making no more disturbance than a roving fish.

Apparently satisfied that there was no threat from that side, the man turned and started back up the porch steps.

Simon slithered out of the water as noiselessly as a snake, and darted after him. The man had no more than set one foot on the verandah when the Saint's arm whipped around his throat from behind, and tightened with a subtle but expert pressure. . .

As the man went limp, Simon lowered him quietly to the boards. Then he swiftly peeled off his victim's jacket and trousers and put them on himself. They were a scarecrow fit, but for that once the Saint was not thinking of appearances: his main object was to confuse the watchdogs' sense of smell.

The back door was still slightly ajar, and if there were any alarms wired to it the guard must have switched them off before he opened it. The Saint went through without hesitation, and found himself in a large old-fashioned kitchen. Another door on the opposite side logically led to the main entrance hall. Past the staircase was the front door of the house, which was also ajar, meaning that another guard had gone out to investigate the disturbance at the entrance gate. The Saint crossed the hall like a hasty ghost and went out after him.

The dogs were still barking vociferously in spite of having already aroused the attention they were supposed to, as is the immoderate habit of dogs, and their redundant clamor was ear-splitting enough to have drowned much louder noises than the Saint's barefoot approach. One of them did look over its shoulder at him as he came down the drive, but was deceived as he had hoped it would be by the familiar scent of his borrowed clothing and by the innocuous direction from which he came; it turned and resumed its blustering baying at Irma, who was pleading with the burly man who stood inside the gate.

The whole scene was almost too plainly illuminated under the glare of an overhead floodlight; but the man was completely preoccupied with what was in front of him, doubtfully twirling a large iron key around a stubby forefinger, as Simon came up behind him and slashed one hand down on the back of his neck with a sharp smacking sound. The man started to turn, from pure reflex, and could have seen the Saint's hand raised again for a lethal follow-up before his eyes rolled up and he crumpled where he stood. The dogs stopped yapping at last

and licked him happily, enjoying the game, as Simon took the key from him and put it in the massive lock. Antique as it looked, its tumblers turned with the smoothness of fresh oil, and Simon pulled the gate open.

"How wonderful!" she breathed. "I was afraid to believe you could really do it."

"I wasn't certain myself, but I had to find out."

"But why—" She fingered the sleeve that reached only halfway between his elbow and his wrist.

"I'll explain another time," he said. "Come on—but be quiet, in case there are any more of them."

She tiptoed with him back to the house. The hallway was deathly still, the silent emptiness of the ground floor emphasized by the metronome ticking of a clock. Simon touched her and pointed upwards, and she climbed the stairs behind him.

The upper landing was dark, so that a thin strip of light underlining one door helpfully indicated the only occupied room. The Saint took out his knife again and opened the longest blade, holding it ready for lightning use as a silent weapon if the door proved to be unlocked —which it did. He felt no resistence to a tentative fractional pressure after he had stealthily turned the door-knob. He balanced himself, flung it open, and went in.

The only occupant, a pale shock-headed man in trousers and shirtsleeves, shrank back in the chair where he sat, staring.

"Professor Jorovitch, I presume?" said the Saint unoriginally.

Irma brushed past him.

"Papa!" she cried.

Jorovitch's eyes dilated, fixed on the automatic which Simon had lent her, which waved in her hand as if she had forgotten she had it. Bewilderment and terror were the only expressions on his face.

Irma turned frantically to the Saint.

"You see, they have done it!" she wailed. "Just as I was afraid. We must get him away. Quick—do what you have to!"

Simon Templar shook his head slowly.

"No," he said. "I can't do that."

She stared at him.

"Why? You promised—"

"No, I didn't, exactly. But you did your best to plant the idea in my head. Unfortunately, that was after I'd decided there was something wrong with your story. I was bothered by the language you used, like 'the capitalist life', and always carefully saying 'Soviet' where most people say 'Russian', and saying that hearing my name was 'like winning a big prize' instead of

calling it a miracle or an answer to prayer, as most people brought up on this side of the Curtain would do. And being so defensive about your hotel. And then when we came over this afternoon I noticed there was no Russian flag flying here, as there would be on diplomatic property."

"You're mad," she whispered.

"I was, rather," he admitted, "when I suspected you might be trying to con me into doing your dirty work for you. So I called an old acquaintance of mine in the local police, to check on some of the facts."

The gun in her hand levelled and cracked.

The Saint blinked, but did not stagger. He reached out and grabbed her hand as she squeezed the trigger again, and twisted the automatic out of her fingers.

"It's only loaded with blanks," he explained apologetically. "I thought it was safer to plant that on you, rather than risk having you produce a gun of your own, with real bullets in it."

"A very sensible precaution," said a gentle new voice.

It belonged to a short rotund man in a pork-pie hat, with a round face and round-rimmed glasses, who emerged with as much dignity as possible from the partly-open door of the wardrobe.

Simon said: "May I introduce Inspector Oscar Kleinhaus? He was able to tell me the true story—that Karel Jorovitch had already defected, weeks ago, and had been given asylum without any publicity, and that he was living here with a guard of Swiss security officers until he completed all the information he could give about the Russian espionage apparatus in Switzerland. Oscar allowed me to go along with your gag for a while—partly to help you convict yourself beyond any hope of a legal quibble, and partly as an exercise to check the protection arrangements."

"Which apparently leave something to be desired," Kleinhaus observed mildly.

"But who would have thought it'd be me they had to keep out?" Simon consoled him magnanimously.

The two guards from the back and the front of the house came in from the landing, looking physically none the worse for wear but somewhat sheepish—especially the one who was clad only in his underthings.

"They weren't told anything about my plan, only that they were going to be tested," Simon explained, as he considerately shucked off and returned the borrowed garments. "But they were told that if I snuck close enough to grab them or slap them they were to assume they could just as well have been

killed, and to fall down and play dead. We even thought of playing out the abduction all the way to Zurich."

"That would have been going too far," Kleinhaus said. "But I would like to know what was to happen if you got away from here."

"She said she'd arranged for a car to pick us up at Brunnen, and there would be a light plane waiting for a supposed invalid at the Zurich airport—which would have taken him at least as far as East Germany."

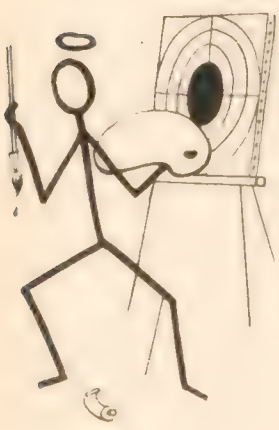
"They will be easy to pick up," Kleinhaus sighed. "Take her away."

She spat at the Saint as the guards went to her, and would have clawed his eyes if they had not held her efficiently.

"I'm sorry, darling," the Saint said to her. "I'm sorry it had to turn out like this. I liked your story much better."

The irony was that he meant it. And that she would never believe him.

NEXT MONTH –



IN THE TEETH OF THE EVIDENCE
by DOROTHY L. SAYERS

THE TULIP BULB
by ANDRE MAUROIS

WILD BILL HICCUP
by WILLIAM IRISH

PRINCESS OF THE NILE
by H. BEDFORD JONES

THE UNLICENSED VICTUALLERS
by LESLIE CHARTERIS

and

THE MISSING ACTOR

A NEW STORY by FREDRIC BROWN

in the November 1963 issue, THE SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE

the night of february 17, 1924

by Cornell Woolrich

THREE WOMEN came first. One was a blonde, one a redhead, one a brunette. As though exemplifying the differing tastes of that many unseen men. They all had one thing in common; they were all extremely tall. As though that too had been a determining factor in their present status. Among others. They were dressed as the mode of the moment dictated: shorn hair (in the case of one, it was even shingled at the back of the neck like a man's); cocoon-like wraps, held closed by being interfolded across the body, with the arms kept on the inside, and pencil-straight skirts that fell almost to the tops of their shoes.

Behind them walked a man. Very close behind them. Almost giving the impression of a watchful sheep dog, guiding his charges in his master's absence. Although his arms weren't extended out from his body, that was the feeling one had; that if these girls should stray a little

---

When we came to this country, more than a generation ago, men such as Abbazzia and Frankie Yale were much in the news. In Chicago a man they called Al had already come far in his particular struggle for power. All over the country, in those Prohibition days, there were men such as these who had turned their backs on their past. Cornell Woolrich, author of THE BRIDE WORE BLACK, PHANTOM LADY, etc., and one of the great names in this field for the past generation, here recreates those days — and those nights — with unusual vividness. *H.S.S.*

Copyright 1958 by Cornell Woolrich.
Reprinted by permission of the author.

too far over, either to one side or the other, he would corral them back to dead-center again.

Unlike women walking together as a rule, no matter how short the distance, they moved in prudent silence. As if having learned that the slightest word, no matter how harmlessly said, might be misconstrued and turned against the speaker at some later summing-up or betrayal, and it was safer therefore not to speak at all.

Close together and yet in this lonely sort of silence, they entered the elevator with their guard, and were carried up from sight. It came down again presently, but the girls were no longer on it, only the man was. He was dancing a key up and down in his hand. The sheep were in the fold and the shepherd's loyal helper had them safely locked in. He went out to the entrance and stood there on the topmost step, as if watching for someone's arrival.

Within moments after, the arrival had occurred. It was the looked-for event. The way the man blocking the entrance quickly took his hand from the doorway, stepped back to give clearance, showed that. It was both multiple and yet strangely compact. It was that of a phalanx of men. One man in the center, one at each side of him, one at his back. Their bodies all swung to the same walking-rhythm: brisk, staccato, purposeful.

The one in the center was rather short. The rest were all a half-head taller. Perhaps because of his shorter height, he gave an impression of plumpness that was not justified by his actual girth. Padding in the shoulders of his coat, almost as oblique as epaulettes, did its part as well.

He was surprisingly young-looking, thirty-three or four at most. But even here there were qualifying factors. It was not the youthfulness of pre-maturity, when character lines have not yet become deeply enough indented to be permanent attributes of the countenance; it was rather a reverse process, an erasure, of lines and traces that had already *been* there. The face was becoming vapid, a cipher, and tricked the eye at first into mistaking this for juvenility. It wasn't; it was decay, an immeasurably hastened senility. It was erosion, leading toward an ultimate idiocy.

The group compressed itself into the elevator. The man who had been waiting at the doorway entered last and took over the controls, motioning the regular operator out. The latter, taken by surprise, just stood there with his mouth open as the car went up. The impromptu operator overshot the correct floor. He had to check the car jarringly, reverse it with a jerk, and

then again he overshot the mark slightly in the opposite direction. He finally adjusted the car-level to the correct height.

When they stepped off, one of them dropped behind long enough to warn the recent operator in an undertone: "What's the matter, you nervous? He didn't like that; I saw him look at you!"

"I never drove one of them before," protested the unhappy amateur.

"Well, you shoulda practiced. He likes everything to run smooth. Now take it down back where it come from."

Meanwhile, ghostly music that had been whispering along the corridor suddenly blared out as a door opened to admit them, and the blonde one of the three girls stood by it waiting to receive them. The hindmost one chucked her under the chin as they entered, and an incandescent smile immediately flashed on, as though he'd turned a switch just below her jaw.

The door was closed, but one of them remained by it, immovable. "Augie's still coming up," he explained. "I sent him down with the car."

Within a few moments a low-pitched voice said, "Augie," just outside; it was reopened briefly, and then it was closed and locked with a finality that meant all further ingress was at an end.

Nobody said anything for several minutes, although there were now eight people in the room. The short man who had been in the center of all of them spoke first. It was as though they had all been waiting to take their cue from him.

A baleful expression flickered across his face. "Who would've ever thought that Abbazzia would find himself holed up in a fleabag hotel like this with the last few of his guys?" he said, as though speaking about some third person of great consequence.

"It'll blow over," the one they called Carmine said.

Abbazzia went over and sank into an easy chair. "My mistake was waiting too long," he said. "I got careless. Now he's taken the town away from me."

"He won't have it long," Sal promised.

Abbazzia looked at him bleakly. "He's got it now, Salvatore, and it's the now that counts, in this deal. There ain't no more than now. There ain't no next time. Every speak from Tenth Avenue over to Third is paying its protection to him now, not us any more. Every truck that comes down from the border—" He put his hand to his eyes, shading them for a minute.

The redhead began sidling over on a careful diagonal, like someone who watches where she puts her foot at every step, her object evidently consolatory.

Augie caught sight of her and tactfully motioned her back. "He'll call you over when he wants you."

Abbazzia continued to direct his remarks to the men in the room, ignoring the girls. He showed them his open hand, to show them that it was empty. "Seven," he whined in lamentation. "Seven all at one time. Who've I got left? Where'm I gonna get that kind again? They don't come like them any more. Guys that started out with me in the old days."

"Did you read the papers, about how they found Ruffo?" Sal asked him, with a peculiar glitter in his coffee-bean eyes that might have been latent sadism as much as vengeful group-loyalty.

"How'm I gonna read the papers," Abbazzia answered impatiently. "I come away from there so fast, when the word come the heat was up—"

Sal moistened his lips. "He was on the top floor of this garage, when they found him. Him, he was the only one didn't have no shoes or socks on. So first they couldn't figure it. Then they noticed these razor blades lying there. The skin on the bottom of his feet was peeled off, real thin, like when you buy ham in a delicatessen. And then on the sea-ment floor was this big burnt place; you know, like when you pour a big puddle of crankcase oil and put a match to it. And then bloody footprints that kept going back and forth, back and forth, over it. I guess they held onto him tight and made him keep walking across it, over and over—Maybe with a couple of car engines turning over downstairs, to drown out his screams."

Abbazzia's expression didn't falter, his contemplative eyes never once left the speaker's face as he listened. "That's one I never thought of myself," he mused wistfully when it was over. "I wonder who got it up?"

"I wonder how long he lasted?" Carmine remarked idly.

Sal turned toward him scornfully. "What's the difference how long? He didn't make it, did he?"

"A lot of difference to *him*, I bet, Carmine pointed out, "if it was long or short" A chuckle clucked in his throat.

Abbazzia yawned, hitched his elbows back, straddled his legs still further apart. "I'm tired," he droned languidly. "Getting out of there in such a hurry, like that. My feet cramp me."

At once, as though an esoteric signal had been given her, the redhead sluiced forward from her position in the background, dropped deftly to her knees directly before his chair, began to pick busily at the lace of his shoe with her long magenta-lacquered nails. In a moment she had eased the shoe off. He lordily crossed one leg over the other, so that

she could more easily reach the second one.

Having taken off the second shoe, she steadied his foot by placing his hand under the arch, lowered her head, and pressed her lips warmly to his instep.

"That's what I think of my Jakie!" she proclaimed, rearing her head again.

Abbazzia reached out and roughed her hair slightly, as one would playfully disarrange a dog's coat. "You stay with me tonight," he vouchsafed indulgently.

The two remaining girls exchanged a quick look of chagrin and frustration.

Whether due to the preceding little by-play or not, Abbazzia had now mellowed into a better humor. "Come on!" he ordered. "What're you guys standing around looking so glum about? There ain't nobody dead here. And when there is, it ain't going to be any of us. Let's liven it up a little!" He turned to Augie. "Got anything on you?"

"Sure, never travel without it." Augie produced a bottle.

"That ain't our own, is it Abbazzia cautioned mistrustfully.

"Naw. This is the regular stuff, uncut," was the answer.

The blonde was busily cranking the handle of a little flat-topped portable phonograph. She put a record on the mildly stirring turntable, lowered the needle-arm, and after a brief series of thin, piping discords, a tinny smothered voice began to whine:

> "Whaddya do Sunday,
> Whaddya do Monday,
> Mai–ry?"

"Dance with Augie," Abbazzia commanded, giving the nestling redhead a slight push to dislodge her from the chair-arm.

The redhead pouted. "I'd rather dance with you."

"Who're you that he should dance with you?" one of the men reminded her.

Abbazzia's eyelids lowered a trifle, dangerously. "I said dance with Augie. And you know how I mean. I get a kick just watching the two of you."

At the repetition of the order, the redhead rose to her feet with a swift immediacy that left no doubt of her intention to fully obey, gave her dress a down ward pull, and opened her arms statically toward her enjoined partner.

He remained fixed where he was. "Well, come over where I am, if you want to dance with me," he said churlishly. "I ain't going to you."

She had to cross the better part of the room, until she was standing right up against him. Only then did he exert himself enough to put an arm about her waist.

They began to move together with tiny, almost minuscule steps that barely took them anywhere Abbazzia watched for a moment with eye-bulging intentness. Then, with querulous dissatisfaction, "That ain't hotsy enough. Do it like you did it up in my place the other night."

"It takes 'em a minute or two, they gotta get warmed up." Sal chuckled obscenely.

"The music's too slow," the redhead protested defensively, her voice smothered against her partner's shoulder. "You can't do anything with it."

"Here's a better one," the self-appointed custodian of the small phonograph announced, having shuffled a number of records hastily through her hands.

She interrupted the bleats coming from it, and after a brief hiatus, it resumed at a quicker tempo, with a sound like twigs being snapped coursing rhythmically through it.

"Doo wacka-doo, doo wacka-doo,
Doo wacka-do-wacka-doo-wacka-doo."

The redhead's convolutions became almost serpentine. Her partner remained more rigid, though only by a matter of degrees. She was like a wind-wallop pennant flickering and buffeting back against it flagstaff. Neither moved their feet, except to shift weight upon them. Now Sal, crouching on his haunches, beat his hands together in accompaniment low above the floor, as if fanning the music underneath their feet. The blonde snapped her fingers in time, throwing her hand out first to one side of her, then to the other. She called out, "Hey-hey! Hey-hey!" while she did so.

Abbazzia picked up a shaded reading lamp standing on a small table near him, held it aloft, and tipped the shade, so that all the light flooded out at one side, none at the other. He aimed it so that it fell upon the girl's frenzied figure, making a luminous oval across the midsection, striking her directly in the posterior.

Appriced of this, perhaps from former occasions, the girl accommodatingly hiked her skirt up to a point which revealed the undersides of her thighs.

"Back up more," Abbazzia instructed the pair. "You're getting out of range." He adjusted the lamp meticulously as they did so, like a surveyor correcting his sights.

The girl, who had been snapping her fingers in time during the earlier stages, changed her jargon-calls now that a climax was being reached. She called out at intervals: "Charles-burg! Charles-burg!"

"Where'd you get that one?" the brunette squealed delightedly.

"There was an out-of-town guy at the club the other night," the other explained. "Every time he got up, he wanted to say 'Charleston!' and he couldn't get it straight, it wouldn't come out right."

"I like that," her companion proclaimed zestfully. "It's good."

"Help yourself," the first invited drily. "It's free."

They both chimed in together, p a r r o t i n g "Charles - burg! Charles - burg!" Then doubled over in risible appreciation of this newly coined *bon mot*.

The male participant in the exhibition, meawhile, had suddenly begun to flag; moisture bedewed his pale face. His partner's gyrations continued without inhibition.

"Hold it a minute," he panted in an urgent, suppressed voice. "Get back from me, will ya?" He w r e n c h e d his companion's clutching hands off and thrust her backaway from him, so that there was clearance between them for the first time.

He stood as though unable or unwilling to move for a moment, exactly as the last paroxysm of the dance had left him.

The other four men watching gave vent to a roar of spontaneous delight that had something as unclean about it as a geyser of mud.

The brunette commented in an undertone: "Get that. He wore out before she did."

The blonde said something to her in explanation behind the back of her hand.

"Oh," said the first one knowingly, now that she was enlightened. "I forgot to think about that."

"You *what?*" was the tart rebuttal. "How old are you anyway?

The d a n c e r s separated and went their ways. Each in his own manner. She, to throw herself down in a chair, with head lolling back and fanning herself with one hand held limply, but otherwise composed, u n c o n cerned. But he, slinking off with a suggestion of crouched maladroitness in his carriage, as though he were undergoing a private imbalance that she could not by nature be subject to. To seek a corner by himself, hook his fingers into his shirt collar, as if to ease an intolerable constriction, and sit there, head bowed, in a sort of male loneliness.

"That was good," Abbazzia summed it up. "That was the best yet. He ain't got no sense of humor, though," he regretted, dismissing the whole episode.

He yawned cavernously. "I'm beat," he said.

There were immediate preparations for departure by everyone in the room except the redhead. The brunette knuckled the closed bath-door glancingly in passing. "Come on," she said

possessively over her shoulder. "Jake's getting sleepy."

Carmine turned and asked Sal, "Which side of him you taking?"

"I'll go over here," Sal decided with a pitch of his thumb at the blank wall behind him. "You get in there. Augie can go downstairs and stick by the switchboard, Nick can go out in the hall and keep the elevator covered."

"Go in there next door first and see if you can hear me," Abbazzia ordered, eyes glittering alertly with the instinct for self-preservation. "We don't want no slips. Both of you. Then come back and let me know."

They nodded, opened the door, went out into the hall, and closed it after them.

Abbazzia got up from the chair, rammed one fist deep down into his pocket, arm held stiffly at his side in tension. "They gotta get in here fast, in case I need them," he explained to the respectfully watching girls. He went over toward the wall on the left-hand side first coiled his free hand drew it back, and thumped loudly three times, at spaced intervals.

Within a matter of seconds, not minutes but seconds, the room-door burst backward and Carmine strode in, a snub-nosed revolver held springily down beside his hipjoint.

"Heard je," he said triumphantly. "How was that for speed?"

Abbazzia narrowed his eyes mistrustfully. "How many knocks I'd give it?" he catechized.

"Three," Carmine answered. He reinserted his gun under his left armpit.

Abbazzia nodded approvingly. "You heard me," he admitted.

He turned to face the other way. "Now we'll try Sal's side." He pummeled the wall heavily. Then a second time. Then a third. "I'll give it four this time," he said, jaw clenched with effort. The impact of the blow coincided with the flaring-open of the door, with the latter just preceding it by some instants.

Sal's revolver was bedded within the side pocket of his coat, but reared perpendicularly so that the whole coat hem rose with with it to a squat-nosed projection. "Clear as a bell!" he reported sanguinely.

Again Abbazzia's eyes squinted. "How many times 'dI sound off?" he growled truculently.

Sal looked slightedly taken back. "I only caught two," he admitted.

Abbazzia's face twisted into a violent blob of rage, like unbaked dough squeezed between the hands of a pastry cook. "You lyin'—!"he exploded virulently. "I done it four times! You're going to tell me it's twice, haa?"

He coiled a forearm far back of his shoulder, swung rabidly

with it, caught the bodyguard flat-handed on the side of the face with a sound like wet linen being pounded on a clothesline. Then again on a pendulum-like reverse swing. The third slap only missed contact because Sal veered his head acutely aside, without however moving his body back.

Hand poulticing his stricken cheek, his attitude was one of rueful, misunderstood loyalty. "Hold it, boss," he protested virtuously. "Hold it a minute."

"I don't like for nobody to lie to me, see? Abbazzia shrilled.

"I caught the first one sitting in the chair, waiting for it to come. By the time the second one come, I was halfway through the door already. Naturally, I missed the last two because I wasn't in the room no more by that time. What should I do, sit there counting 'em off on my fingers? If them things was wrong-way bullets, four would be too many to wait for. While I'm waiting to count, you're—" He left it eloquently unfinished.

Abbazzia took a moment to consider this, crinkling his eyes speculatively first, then widening them in elated appreciation. "Yeah!" he concurred with enthusiasm. "That was the smart thing to do! It's the speed what counts when I'm sending for you, not the arithmetic." He turned his head a moment in oblique disparagement. "Why-d'nt you think of that, Carmine?" And to the rest of them, as though he had been the one taking Sal's part all along and they had been in opposite judgment: "See what a smart boy I got here? What're you trying to tell me, he ain't smart?" Again his hand went out toward Sal, but this time to clap him on the shoulder rewardingly, to squeeze his biceps affectionately. Even to pinch the point of his chin and wag it playfully to and fro.

He reached into his pocket, took out a billfold, took something out of that, prodded it down into Sal's breast pocket like a handkerchief. "Blow your nose on that," he instructed jovially.

"Now clear out and lemme get some sleep." He crossed his forearms, fanned them apart, in general room-wide dismissal. They went in pairs for the most part, Carmine with the blonde, Sal with the brunette, the other two to night-long sentinel duty, one downstairs, one in the hall. No good nights were said. Perhaps good nights were for people who lived less dangerously; just to survive the night itself, that alone was sufficient well-being.

"Take good care of him for us," the blonde warned, with an undertone of jealousy.

"And I'm the girl that can do it," was the pert answer.

The door closed.

"Lock it up on the inside," Abbazzia ordered.

He looked at her from where he lay sprawled out in the chair. His look was lethargic, even somnolent. Not the somnolence caused by sleep, but the somnolence caused by the dregs of a spent passion that can no longer stir or vivify. His arms and legs seemed to fall away from him of their own accord, so that his sprawl became even looser.

"Undress me," he commanded in a monotone.

The girl quickly advanced, a smile starched on her face. She slid downward onto her knees before him, reached gingerly forward toward the topmost button of his jacket, as quiveringly as though she were afraid of getting an electric shock.

He allowed the lids to close over his eyes, the better to retain whatever distorted images this was about to bring him.

Just as her fingertips touched the button, and almost as though it were an effect generated by her touching of it, there was a single, low knock on the outside of the door.

Her hands scampered back to her own person, like two ashamed things seeking refuge. They all but tried to burrow inside her clothing and hide themselves.

His eyelids went up, furrowed with annoyance. "Go see what they want now," he told her. "One of 'em must have forgot something."

She unlocked the door, but her arm held out across it still blocked the way. A hand flung the arm contemptuously aside.

An old, old woman all in black was standing there. Short and stocky, like he was. Her face long-dead; only the eyes still alive. Bitterly alive.

This black wasn't the black of fashion, the black of Rome and New York, trim and just-so. This was the black the women of Catania wore, in the after-years of their lives, after they had lost their men. Homespun and shapeless, and with no intent to please. To show life was through, and that the wearer was through with life.

"Get out!" she commanded the girl stonily.

Stunned into alertness, his back reared from its supine position against the chair. "How'd *you* get here?" he breathed in amazement.

He became aware of the girl, still cringing there to one side of the two of them. "You heard her. Get out," he repeated. "Wait outside. I'll let you know when I want you back."

She slipped around one side of the door-frame and was gone from sight, as furtively as though she were afraid to come into line with those terrible eyes staring so fixedly into the room at him, like messengers of denunciation.

"Rifiuto!" the old woman said balefully. Garbage.

He demanded: "Whaddya doin' here like this? Don'tcha know it's risky to come here?"

She pitched her head interrogatively. *"Che significa,* 'risky'?"

"Pericoloso," he translated unwillingly, as though averse to following her into the language of his former days, the one learned at her lips.

"Pericoloso per chi?" She gave a snort of scorn-curdled laughter.

Risky for whom? Risky for you, maybe. Not for me. I have killed no one. I have robbed no one. I go unafraid.

"Now that you're here, whaddya want? Whadja come for? To say good-bye to me?"

She tossed her head impatiently, as when one is bored by having to return to an old subject that was closed long ago. *"Ti dissi addio . . ."*

I said good-bye to you ten long years ago, night after night in the dark, on my knees before the blessed image of Our Lady; drops of water falling from my eyes, drops of blood falling from my heart. She did not smile on me. It was too late then already for anything except good-bye. Then, it was finished. That was my good-bye.

"You're talkin' crazy," he said uncomfortably. He got up from the chair. "Then whaddya here for, to preach to me?"

She grappled beneath the seedy black garb that encased her. A sheaf of banded currency was in her hand when she brought it out again.

"A ridarti . . ."

To give back this . . .

She showed it to him first, lying in her palm. Then she spat violently into the middle of it, and flung it away from her. It landed anywhere, she did not look to see, she did not want to know.

"Danara insanguinato . . ."

Money with blood on it! The dead cry out from this kind of money. Their voices are within it.

"You're a fool," he sneered. "You could have had everything in the world, and you live like a rat in a hole—"

"No, sei tu l'idota . . ."

No, you are the fool, not I! She struck her hand sharply against her chest.

"Io sono onesta . . ."

I am honest. I am a poor woman, but I am honest, clean. My husband worked hard all his life until he died worn-out, but he too was clean. We were not like you.

He strode toward her furiously, backed his arm in threat.

She didn't flinch. *"Colpiscimi . . ."* Hit me. It will not be the first time.

"You lying old bat!" This time his arm completed the threat, he struck her across the face.

She tottered, regained her balance, only smiled sleepily. The eyes that looked at him held no pity, no softness, not any kind of feeling at all. They were eyes of glass, of agate in a statue.

"Questo e' i lmomento . . ."

This is the hour I knew would come. I have waited for it many years. Now it is here. In my village there was a saying when I was a young girl. "God punishes without having to use hands or feet." My heart is as dead as a stone. For, *I am one of those you have killed.* The first, perhaps. More slowly than some of the others, but as completely. I walk around in the grave you have put me in. And in the grave there are not mothers, only corpses.

She turned away abruptly, in leave-taking without farewell.

"It will be finished soon, anyway," he heard her say stonily.

"They'll never get me!" he shouted toward her. "D'ye hear what I'm saying? They'll never—!"

She looked back briefly, nearer the door now. "They do not have to. You will go just as surely, without them. Your years are already days, your days are minutes. You have the Bad Sickness in you. The sickness that creeps like a worm, and once it is in, cannot be got out again. No man's hands needs to be raised against you . . ."

He stared at her in almost superstitious fright. "Even that you know—" he breathed in awe. "Who told you?" Nobody knows that about me!" Mechanically, as if from some long-forgotten habit interred for years and now brought to the surface again by sudden instinctive fear, he made a sneaking, furtive sign of the cross. "What are you, a witch or something?"

She slitted her eyes at him in contempt. *"Non v'era bisogno di dirlo . . ."*

One does not have to be told. One sees the signs. This is nothing new. I saw it in my village, small as it was, when I was young. Even there it was not new. One crossed to the other side of the road in passing it by, that was all. I knew it had come into my house already when you were still only a boy of sixteen.

His breath hissed in stunned intake.

"La tazza, la forchetta . . ."

The cup you drank from, the fork you ate with, kept apart, hidden from the rest. They were always missing when I washed the things. Those were the signs that told me. You did not come to me for help. You went to the streets for help, instead. The streets where you already robbed the storekeepers, and roamed at night the leader of a pack, marauding with knives. And the streets gave you back what you had given to them. Now the mark is on you, and it

is too late for help any more.

The arms and the legs die, and you cannot move any more. Then the tongue dies, and there are no more words, only sounds like the animals make. Childhood comes back, but going the other way, rushing toward you from the grave.

"Shut up!" he squalled, and cupped the heels of his hands tight against his ears.

She turned away with a flick of disgust. The door opened at her grip. He was watching her now with a mixture of disbelief and defiant bravado.

"You walking out on me this way? You too? My own mother? All right, go ahead! Who needs you? *Vecchia.* Just an old woman. You shut up all these years, though, didn't you, when things were going good?" he railed. "And now cuz you think they're going bad, you turn on me like all the rest."

She released a scoffing breath.

He changed suddenly, softened for a moment. "Close the door," he coaxed. "Come on back in. Stay with me awhile. I'm lonely. I ain't got nobody of my own. These others — D'you remember when I was a kid, and you used to make lasagne for Vito and me, and bring 'em hot to the table—?"

"Quella non ero io. . . ."

That was not I, that was another woman, long gone now. A woman whose prayers were not answered.

"You're my mother, you can't change that," he told her, between a snicker and a derisive grin, like one who is certain he holds the upper hand.

"Io non sono piu' tua madre . . ." she whispered.

Mother, no. Just a woman who bore a devil. The woman who once bore you says good-bye to you.

The door clapped closed and she was gone.

His mouth opened in a gape of disbelief, a disbelief such as one might feel if one stood back and watched one's own self betray one.

Then it clicked shut, and defiance spread over his face once more. He swept his arm out and around before him in contmptuous dismissal. "All right, let 'em all go!" he bellowed. "All of 'em! I don't need nobody! I'll make it alone! I come up by myself, and I'll stay up by myself!"

He went over and looked into the mirror, and straightened the hug of the padding that sloped upon his shoulders.

"It's me for me, all by myself, just like it's always been," he said aloud to the scowling reflection facing him. "If God ain't going to forgive you, if God ain't going to give you a break, then what good is God? They can have God. I'll take Abbazzia.

What good is being good? You stay poor all your life, like her and eighty million others. You get run over by a car like my brother Vito did, and they let you lie there in the rain, newspapers from a trash can spread over you. Then 'cause a priest comes and mumbles over you, that means you're going to heaven. Who wants to go to heaven in the rain, on an empty stomach, soaking newspapers thrown over you without a dime in your pocket? The hell with heaven. He worked hard, he never scrapped, he never pulled a knife on no one. *He* was good, and look what he got. I was smart, and look what *I* got—"

He flourished his own hand toward his reflection's hand, so that his reflection's eyes could see the explosively brilliant diamond on the little finger.

He picked up the money she had flung on the floor. "There ain't no good or bad, anyway," he grunted. "They just tell you that in the church when you're a kid, to keep you from getting wise that everyone else has something, and you ain't got nothing. There's only dumb and smart. And if you don't want to be the one, then you gotta be the other."

He riffled the money back into orderly shape, tucked it into his billfold, put it away.

He summed up his life, content with it, proud of it.

"Abbazzia picked smart for his."

Then he went over to the door, and opened it. He gave a curt summons, without looking, "Hey, you! You can come in now. Whaddya waiting for? Didn't you see her go?"

He turned away without waiting, and took out a cigarette and a pocket lighter. Then before he had brought the two of them together, he stopped again and glanced back at the door in angered disbelief. It was still open just as he had left it. No one had come in through it.

He flung the cigarette down, went over to it a second time, and looked out.

There was no one in sight. The hall was empty.

He stalked across the room to the telephone, wrenched the earpiece of the crotch that held it, and shouted harshly, "Hey, down there! Is that bi— Is that girl around? Tell her to get back up here, and make it snappy, or I'll—"

A man's voice, subdued, almost faint by comparison to the violence in his own, intercepted: "Yes, sir?"

"That girl—" he fairly shrieked. "I want her up her! I don't let nobody make me wait like this!"

"A—a red-haired young lady?" the man at the other end finally hazarded.

"Who remembers what they look like!" thundered Abbazzia.

"Yeah! Red-headed."

"I'm sorry, sir. She left the building."

There was a moment of sudden stunned silence. "She *what?* What'd you just say?"

"She's not in the building any longer," the voice repeated, "I saw her leave by the front entrance."

A sudden blue bead of flame winked up from the incessantly manipulated pocket lighter in his free hand, and noticing for the first time what he had been doing with it, he flung it violently away from him, as though it, somehow, were to blame for this unprecendented affront, this laceration to his dignity, offered to boot not even by a subordinate but by a lower form of life altogether.

He picked up at long last the remaining part of the phone, the stem part. His voice was less raucous now, more bated. "That man I left down there. Put him on. Tell him I want to talk to him a minute."

"The man that was posted here by the switchboard?" the voice inquired, to make sure of correct identification.

"Him! Get a move on!"

"I'm sorry. He left with her."

The stunning impact of the news made Abbazzia take a step back on one leg, as though the telephone had suddenly pushed him away.

He was having trouble with his breathing now; it came too full one moment, too scant the next. He didn't answer; he closed off the connection almost furtively. As though afraid to leave even that small orifice leading into his room: an electrical impulse within a sheathed wire.

The pupils of his eyes moved too far over into one corner, then too far back into the opposite corner, then all the way back to the first again; never remaining at calm center. Like pools of quicksilver clinging to a ledge.

He darted a look at the lateral wall. "Wait'll I get Sal in here! Gotta get Sal in here—!"

He scurried toward it on the bias, giving a heedless shove to a chair that nearly overturned it, to get it out of the way rather than go around it, so intent was he on getting over there fast.

He struck at the wall, and it gave back a loud but flat-sounding throbbing, that raced around the room and died again into silence. Then he struck once more, and then once more. Silence came back again each time. He even turned around to face the door, waiting to witness Sal's headlong rush across the threshold, as at the rehearsal. He even took a precautionary step out of the way, to allow him plenty of clearance, so that they wouldn't collide.

Nothing occurred. The door remained lifeless.

This time his arm moved like

a triphammer. Its motions blurred, they could no longer be identified individually, so fast it struck, so incessantly. So frightenedly, so despairingly. He even cried out his name: "Sal!" And then again: "Sal! Why don't you come in here?"

His arm suddenly dropped, and swung there fallow.

"Gone," he panted. "Him too."

Then he laced around with the swiftness of a top when a child whisks the wound-up guide cord out from under it, and flung himself at the opposite wall, across from the first. Both his arms were out, as when one runs forward to embrace someone or something, enclose it, draw it to you. Thus his whole body careened into the wall in that position; arms akimbo, hands overhead, chest pressed flat against it.

For a moment he lay that way, like a cardboard cutout of a man pasted flat against a wall-surface; every inert turn of his body expressing the one word "despair." Then his hands began to ripple, beating tattoo with their palms, like a drummer using the plaster for his drumhead. Faster and faster they went, frenzied, battering. And his voice-box, partly stopped up by the wall and made hollow-sounding against it, kept calling out in agonized repetition the second one's name, the one who was supposed to be behind there on this side. And broke and crumbled at last into pleadings and sobbings that could not have carried through to the other side even *had* somebody been there. "Carmine, come in, I need you! Carmine, you're there, ain't you? Carmine, I'll give you anything you want, only come in! It's empty all around me, I'm by myself in here!"

No one, nothing; no sign, no sound. The door stayed mute.

His hands fell still at last, couldn't strike any more. For a moment they stayed in place against the wall, then like five-pronged stains first one and then the other slowly coursed down it and dropped off.

His c h e e k remained flat against it, nuzzling it, as if he held it in some kind of crazed affection, because it had once meant protection, even if it didn't any more.

Then his head turned slowly, and he looked across his shoulder at the door, bulge-eyed, fearful.

Panic. Agoraphobia, with its limitless black horizons and chill, unimpeded death-winds. Nothing at hand to shield, to shelter, to cover one over. His voice whispered its terror. "I'm wide open. They can walk right in off the street and get me! There's nobody in-between any more!"

He flung himself against it, as he had the two walls, and the

impact of his body tossed it closed with a violent clout. His hands, trembling, groped for and turned the lock. And then a last slap against the center of the panel, to hold that fast.

He turned and looked and saw the door of the clothes closet. He opened it, and backed in, and half-crouched there. And drew the door partly to in front of him. For a moment only the four tight-pressed tips of his fingers studded along its edge could be seen, and the brightness of his recessed eyes, glistening with watery animalistic sparkle. And his breath could be heard, against the cavernous echo-chamber that the closet became for it.

Briefly only, he stayed like this. It brought no palliation. Unreasoning agoraphobia wanted more: a hole in the ground, a burrow. Something tighter, closer overhead.

He came out again. And like a naked man who plunges into icy water, the open room caused him to draw shivering breaths.

He made for the bed, and dropped down against the edge of it, the way children do when they're about to say their prayers. But he had no gods, he was his own god, and therefore he had nothing to pray to. Then he lowered himself to the floor from there, all but his rump, and padding on the flats of his hands, like some odd, ungainly animal, drew his head and shoulders in under the bed. Then lolled over on his side, and switched his legs in after him, and then drew his knees up close against his stomach. And lay coiled like that, like some unborn foetus pulsing with premature breath.

His dilated eyes were sighted out along a two-dimensional garden patch of scuffed beige carpet-flowers that seemed to climb upward in their symmetrical rows, shutting out the whole rest of the world. Their perfume was dust, and they lay like dead, unstirring. The edge of the bed came down and cut them off short. They had no sedative effect for terror; they were the flowers of delirium, that come back at night in dreams if looked at too closely and too long.

Now swiftly, within the space of breath-choked minutes, his mania blew inside-out, like an umbrella in a gale. Or like a sleight-of-hand performer who draws a length of gauze through his fingers and causes it to change magically from one hue to the next. Confinement, craved just now, suddenly became the form of terror itself. Agoraphobia turned into claustrophobia. Both were still the same terror, with another name.

His hand pounded the floor beside him. "I can't stay here like a rat in a trap, waiting for 'em to come and get me! I gotta get

out of here! Gotta get out of here fast!" He lashed his legs out into the open, then padded backward on the flats of his hands until his head was in the clear.

"Gotta get on the outside!" he kept muttering. "Gotta lose myself on the outside! That's the only thing'll save me."

He ran to where the suitcase was standing, tossed the lid up and over. His ravening fingers disemboweled its contents; neckties of t r o p i c a l brilliance splashed up, like a neon-geyser, to fall back around him and stay that way, in static ripples. Shirts threw up their empty sleeves like struggling ghosts and expired lifeless on the floor.

He was still talking brokenly to his unseen companion: self-preservation. "Who needs neckties, when it's your neck itself you gotta save?"

Then a gun, bedded in layers of undergarments. He inserted it underneath his coat somewhere. "The only one you can trust, anyway; the one that's right on you." Then more money went into the already sausage-plump billfold.

He stood up and turned to go. "That's all you need," he said. "That's all, in this-here world. Money and a gun. A gun and money. Everything else, you can get with one or the other of them two." And leered with his own wisdom.

He went over to the closed door o n c e more—for the last time, this was to be—and opened it sparingly to look out.

A man was standing down the hall, where the elevator-shaft door was. Not moving, not doing anything. Just standing motionless, head lowered attentively, newspaper spread open just across his breastbone. The brim of his hat kept the light from the upper part of his face, as though he were wearing an eyeshade.

He didn't turn at the sound of Abbazzia opening his door, though he must have heard it in all that stillness. He didn't even seem to be breathing, he was so still.

A b b a z z i a ' s fear-sensitized nerves jerked and recoiled throughout the length and width of his body . He knew. These were the lookouts, these who stood like this. He knew the ways of those who stalk to kill, he knew them well, they'd done his own errands for him too many a time. Sometimes he'd even watched them at a distance, from within the safe anonymity of a parked car. That rigor - mortis - immobility, t h e down-held head so that the eyes could not be seen to move, the sheltering hat-brim, the newspaper that provided the excuse. Then when the quarry had passed, they made the signal that doomed him. In many ways, in

many different ways, they made it. They lowered the newspaper, or blew their nose on a handkerchief, or threw a cigarette away, so that it made a momentary red streak across the dark. All these were the messages of death. Who should know them better than he, he had prearranged so many of them himself.

The ribbon's-width of door-opening had already been effaced, instantly, at first glance. "The window—" came racing d o w n the millway o f h i s thoughts like a bright pebble. "There may be a fire ex-cape—get out through there." He'd first used the word at seven with an *x;* he'd used it that way ever since, and never known in all that time that it was wrong; no one had ever told him so. A wrong word used many times throughout a life; a wrong deed done many times throughout a life; wherein lies the difference?

He didn't draw the shade up, he simply slanted it aside, making a crevice to look through. He saw at once that under the ledge there was nothing, only a sheer drop all the way down to the street.

He was cut off, sealed up in here. The room that had been chosen for a sanctuary because of its inaccessibility, had turned for that very same reason into a tomb.

He lurched with sagging knee-joints back deeper into the room, pushing away an impeding table, propping himself in passing against the top of a chair. Then he stood there a moment, both hands inter-crossed and pressed flat against the center of his forehead. As if there were a pasty-colored star affixed there, with spreading fingers for its many rays.

"I'm finished!" he shuddered deeply. "I'll never get out of here by myself, alive!"

Silence at first, both of voice and of thought. Then that "by myself" began coming back, like an echo, like an afterthought. Louder, more insistent each time, as though he had shouted it out at the top of his voice just now (and he had barely given it breath).

"By myself—" "*By myself—*" "BY MYSELF—"

Ricocheting, playing back to him, glancing off the walls themselves in eerie polyphonic impetus.

His hand dropped from his forehead, suddenly tightened, as if it were grasping an idea, holding onto it for dear life.

"By myself, not a chance. But with somebody else I could make it!"

Then his hand opened a little, almost let the idea go. "Where's the somebody else for me, though? They've all run out. And it would have to be somebody that they're afraid of. Somebody

bigger than them. Bigger than them and bigger than me, both —"

His hand tightened again. Far tighter than it had been the time before. The idea was caught fast now, had taken form, had taken body.

"*Them!*" he breathed, as if in amazement at the idea's simplicity, its logic; in fact, that it had not occurred any sooner than it had. He drove the clenched hand into its opposite now, like a mallet. "Sure! Them! Why not them? I've always laughed at them—They were for the chumps — For the little guys, not the big guys like me—They were for decoration. They turned their backs, when I passed the word. But always with a hand sticking up behind them, like a tail. All I had to do was put something in it, and then they were never around where I didn't want them to be at a certain time. Now I *want* them to be around, that's all. It worked that way, why shouldn't it work this way just as good?"

He hastened to the phone, caught it up.

"I got no bodyguard left?" he breathed above an hysterical, abortive chuckle. "I'll make a bodyguard out of *them!*"

Then he talked into the phone.

"Gimme the police," he ordered.

It was a commanding knock. A double one first, then a single one after. Urgent, demanding. As if to say: "We are the police, and we don't like being kept waiting."

He turned with a grin on his face. "Coming, boys!" he hallelujahed. "Ri-i-ight with you!"

The brassware under his fingers was like a caress, as he unfastened it. It was like gold, and he had always loved to touch gold. Just for its own sake alone.

This door that had kept death out all the long night through—he opened it now to let life in.

He saw their faces first. Life had three faces. There were three of them; one on each side of the opening, the third in mid-center. Oh, what beautiful faces they had; oh, what handsome guys they were; never such good-looking faces before. Next his eyes feasted on their uniforms, like moths that gorge themselves on fabric. The blue service-garb of the Police Department of the City of New York. The brass buttons, the visored caps, the pewter-looking badges affixed over the heart.

Their eyes regarded him, and that was all. Eyes that revealed nothing, other than that they saw him. They didn't speak, he was the one did.

"Gee, am I glad to see you fellows! I never was so glad to see anyone in my life before—"

"You are?" one said, and that was all.

Beside himself, and scarcely knowing what he was doing, he even tried to press the hand of one of them. The man passively let him do so, without making any move of his own. His hand did not return the pressure, and when Abbazzia let it go, it fell back lifeless, boneless, to where it had been before. Thus, there was no handclasp exchanged, for it takes two to produce one.

Two of them came forward now into the room, one turning to the third as they did so and instructing, quiet-voiced: "You wait outside here by the door. We'll be right out."

The door was closed again, locked on the inside, crisply.

Abbazzia had been made almost antic by happiness. He cupped his hands together, leaving an orifice. He blew into it zestfully. He rubbed them together, in anticipation of imminent welcome activity.

"Now I'll get what I'm taking with me," he told them. "Won't take no time at all."

The second officer had crossed to the window, as if to draw the shade. Then seeing that Abbazzia already had it down, he modified his intention, simply stood there with his back to it, in a waiting attitude, hands behind him.

"You won't need that," the other one suggested helpfully to Abbazzia.

"No, I guess you're right," Abbazzia conceded. He cast aside the rejected garment, stooped again to his task.

"Y'got a gun?" the man asked him matter-of-factly.

"Yeah, sure."

"Better let us take it," the patrolman said quietly.

"Okay, if you think it's better that way," Abbazzia assented accommodatingly. He drew it out, offered it to him grip-first.

"Take his gun for him, Charlie," the first one instructed his fellow-patrolman without offering to touch it himself.

The second one uncoupled his hands, came over, accepted it from Abbazzia, and disposed of it somewhere within his uniform jacket, unbuttoning it, rebuttoning it again.

"Thanks a lot," said Abbazzia absently, bending once more.

"You're welcome," answered the first one tonelessly.

Abbazzia straightened again, about to insert something within his own clothing this time.

"You won't need that," he was told, as tonelessly as ever.

Abbazzia stopped long enough to give him a blank look. "Oh, this I will," he contradicted. "This time you're wrong. This is dough. You need that every place you go."

"There's one place you don't," the policeman said expressionlessly. "Not where you're going."

Abbazzia stopped to look at him more fully, more uncompre-

hendingly than the first time. His look became a stare. "What d'ya mean? I don't get you—"

The other one spoke unexpectedly, from behind him. "Let's get finished, shall we, Mike? This is no fun any more."

Abbazzia turned sharply to look at him. He had a gun held in his hand. Not the one Abbazzia had just handed over to him, but one that must have come out of his police-holster. He wasn't aiming it, it just lay idle in his hand, sidewise, as if he were testing its weight.

Abbazzia turned back in consternation to the first one. "What does he need that for?" he asked with quickening tension.

"I don't know," was the dispassionate answer. "Ask him."

But even as he answered, he was unlimbering one of his own.

Abbazzia's voice was beginning to throb. "Wait a minute—I don't get it—"

"You don't get it?" said the one before him, meticulously repetitive. "He don't get it," he said to the one behind.

"Something's wrong here—"

This time the policeman gave a slight head-shake. "Nothing's wrong. Everything's just the way it should be."

"No, it isn't! I feel peculiar. You're making me feel peculiar—the way you're looking at me—something about the way you're looking at me—" He could hardly breathe. Suddenly suspicion, seeping into the overheated crannies of his mind all this while like a combustible gas, ignited, exploded into a ghastly white flash of certainty.

"You ain't real cops—" His lower jaw dangled loosely, as though the mental detonation just now had unhinged it. He got it to cleave to its upper part long enough for utterance. "Barney – Maxwell – didn't – send you!"

"What d'ya know?" the one in front of him appraised the one behind him. "Barney Maxwell didn't send us."

The voice in back of Abbazzia said, "Who's Barney Maxwell?"

"Crooked police captain," the first one explained. "Must've been trying to make a deal with him, to get in out of the open."

At this, Abbazzia's eyes flickered closed in expiring confirmation.

The patrolman plucked briefly at his own coat sleeve to indicate it. "So the cop suits worked?" he leered at Abbazzia. "It's new. First time. And when a thing's still new, you can count on it paying off."

Abbazzia sank downward onto his knees between the two of them, into the little cranny their bodies made for him.

("That's smart," the rearward one said approvingly, "less distance for you to fall.")

His face was turned upward. He started to talk for his life.

Only, lives can't be put into words. "Fellas. Fellas—"

"We *are* fellas," the face bending over him said.

"Fellas, my money— All my money, fellas— Much more than is in this room—"

"What d'ya think, we came here to rob you?" the face smiled. "We ain't thieves."

His voice came straight from his heart now. Every heartbeat swelled it, thinned it, and they were dynamo-quick. "Two minutes. Just give me two minutes. Two minutes, that ain't long to ask for. Just one minute. Don't give it to me cold. Just let me pull myself together, just let me get ready."

"You're ready now," the overhanging face said. And it said crisply to the other one, "Get a pillow. Use one of them."

He put his hand downward onto Abbazzia's shoulder; not heavily, but lightly, as if to balance him there in place. As you hold some inanimate thing steady, keep it from toppling over, until you are ready to have to do with it—whatever it is you have to do with it.

Abbazzia made an infantile puking sound, as when a suckling infant regurgitates upon it's mother's milk, and lurched sideward onto his shoulder and hip. Then like a bisected snake that still has reflexes of motion left to it, he tried to writhe in underneath the bed, to gain the shelter of its iron frame.

The man in the police uniform made a wide scooping motion with his foot, as when you sweep something back toward you that has eluded you, whether inert refuse or scurrying vermin it matters not; and Abbazia had to avert his face from the scraping shoe. Then the man recoiled his foot, and drove his shoe into Abbazzia's lower face, along the floor.

There was dental pain, and bone pain, and a pale-blue flash, like shattered starlight on a disrupted mill-pond. Sluggish warmth backed against the seams of Abbazzia's mouth, and peered forth, emulsion-thick, a laggard bead at a time.

"Hang onto him a minute, be right with you," one of the voices recommended b e l a t e d l y, as though its owner had only then just glanced around at what was taking place.

"Got him," the other assured.

Abbazzia's eyes, like circular mosaics embedded in the floor, stared upward, could see only the ceiling now: an edgeless expanse of white. It was like a burial ground suspended upside-down over him; a potter's field with a fill of white clay.

"A minute— Only a minute—" he whispered.

The sole of a shoe came down across his throat, full stamping-power withheld though, and

kept him pinned there. He could not raise his head at the one side of it, he could not raise his trunk at the other. His fingers scratched the empty air, his arms jittered upward and back in opposing directions like someone flat on his back playing the strings of an invisible harp. Once his flexing fingertips caught onto trousered-leg fabric, at sheer random, and pulled it back, revealing gnarled pebble-white shank and a triangular banding of elastic garter.

Someone chuckled.

Now from opposite sides of the white ceiling-expanse their faces curved over toward him. There was a gusty impact, as when someone drives a blow into the plumpness of a pillow.

Abbazzia gave a choking whinny, and striving mortally managed to tilt the back of his head a little bit off the floor. At once the entire length of body under one of the faces came into perspective. The man was holding a pillow before his own midsection, the curve of one arm supporting it. With the other hand, clenched into a fist, he kept walloping the pillow, driving each successive blow deeper into it. Until he had driven a deep hollow into the inner side of it, opposite his own abdomen.

Then neatly and economically he inserted the gun into the pit he had punched within the pillow. His eyes scanned Abbazzia's form steadily for a moment, as though he were taking aim sight-unseen, by dint of finger-feeling alone. Without raising them, he remarked to his fellow-killer, "Get your foot outta the way, I don't want to nick you."

The waist of the shoe suddenly left Abbazzia's throat. His windpipe seemed to unfold, like a rubber tube that had been trodden flat and slowly fills out again.

The shots followed immediately afterward, without any further preliminary.

The pain came first, then the throbbing drumbeats of the sound. There were many pains, and many drumbeats, but they all came unvaryingly in that order. The pain, and then the stifled thumping sound, and then the pain again, and then the sound. Twice, thrice, four times, five, six.

The pain, each time, was like a rabid needle going into him, drawing after it a scarlet thread of fire. The withdrawal-stitch that followed each plunge of the needle into the fabric of his life was equally excruciating. And then it would plunge in again in a new place, to depths he'd never known he'd had until now, drawing its flaming, snaking thread after it, in sutures that never were over and done with. For the old place continued to hurt no less, while the new place

quickly matched it in height of agony.

He moved very little, just rocked a little from side to side, with an ebbing motion, like something settling to rest. He didn't cry out. This pain was too deep to be voiced. It lacked the breathing spells in-between, in which to gather voice and eject it.

His eyesight fogged, as when someone breathes too closely on a glass, and then cleared again momentarily, but not to the full expanse it had had before; just a small clear patch in the center, wiith mist all around its edges.

He saw a feather come wafting sluggishly down, in zigzag graduated volplane glides from side to side, like something suspended on a hidden thread. It looked so enormous, like the lush tail-plume of an ostrich. It landed on his chest some place, was lost to sight.

High up above he saw a trace of smoke-haze. This went up the other way, as slowly as the feather had come down, erasing itself to nothingness as it went. First it was there, then it was gone.

His eyesight dimmed again, and was no more.

His hearing lingered on, futile, moribund.

An inquiring tap on wood sounded, and a voice answered it, "Yeah, we're through. We're coming."

The hard hub of a shoe pounded against his ribs, like a mallet swung underhand seeking to drive them apart. The pain this time was not of needles, but of splinters. They did not course in and out as the needles had, they remained in his side, crushed, fragmented. As though a huge burr were being held pressed tight up against him.

"Take that with you," a voice said way off in the distance. "That's Big Matt's regards."

A door-latch clicked, many rooms away it seemed.

And in that other, far-off room, that was the world now, that was life now, men exchanged a brief remark or two in passing one another, as he had once himself when he was still among them.

"How'd it sound?"

"Like a guy snapping his fingers at a crap game, that's about all."

And then someone laughed. That was the last time he heard laughter. Only the living can laugh, only the living can hear it. "That was the crap game of death, buster. We cleaned up in there."

Then momentarily, a voice came again, "Close the door," it jeered. "Let him die in privacy."

A latch gave a single clocklike tick, and then there was nothing more of other men, their voices nor their stirrings nor the pain

they gave. He was alone in a world of his own, a world between two other worlds, a blend of each: one of which he had always known, one of which he was still to know.

It was twilight in this world. A peculiar India-ink sort of twilight, in which long horizontal bands of dark, like brush-strokes on a Japanese print, kept ebbing slowly downward, with alternate bands of light between each one. As though somebody were endlessly unfolding a Venetian blind which never found bottom.

It was *un dormetto,* but a particular moment of *un dormetta* caught and held static, prolonged beyond time-reckoning. The moment just before full sleep comes, the moment just before awakening sets in. An empty echo-chamber of the things that were, or the things that were about to be. In each sleeping-time, passed through at a single moment; but in this death-sleep, stretched out into a lifetime of nothingness, the nothingness of a life-time.

Because it was twilight, and once long ago she had used to call him at twilight, a memory came back from somewhere, and found its way into the emptiness.

She was calling him, from the high window of a six-story tenement. Patiently calling, over and over. Never answered, never even acknowledged by an upward turn of the head. Until at last the calling faltered, and wore out, and was gone, defeated until the next time, the next twilight, when it would be defeated again.

"Giacopo! Giacoppino! vieni a mangiare . . ."

Jake. Jakie. Come in and eat.

Over and over again, each twilight. Never answered, never obeyed. Until twilight ended, and it was night, and it was too late. Tired, defeated, the call came no more. Until all the twilights ended, and it was too late. Until boyhood ended, and it was forever night, the long dark night of wayward manhood, and it was too late.

"Giacopo! Giacoppino . . . !" Fainter and fainter, going away now. Just a memory now, just an echo drifting through eternity.

He stirred restlessly, and his heart answered, muted, twenty years too late. His lips struggled to pronounce the answer, the answer she had waited for so long, and never had. His tongue peered forth, drew back. His whole head moved with striving. And then a sighing word stole forth. A single word.

"Vengo . . ."

One word, that would have changed his life, and changed his death, had it been given then instead of now.

And then the effort to obey set in, coursing slowly through him like some hypodermically intro-

duced plasma. His struggles now were terrible to watch, they were so very small. A finger quirked, a foot twitched, an eyelid flickered as if the light of life still shone too strongly on it. In a moment, or in forty, one knee had switched up toward his body like a piston-rod, and then gone down again; switched up, and then at last stayed up. And then his trunk gave a half-turn over, and his hand caught in the bed-stuff above him, and clawed, and stayed.

Then in a little while the other hand was up there with it. But his head hung down between them of its own weight. He'd raise it, but it would go down again. Until a time came, in the blank space that now was time, when it too stayed up.

The night was getting late, and the supper was getting cold, but he'd get there if it took him all eternity. For a spark within him said to heed her call.

The tenement stairs were steep and hard to climb—they always had been, even in those days—and he kept slipping back and slipping back, sometimes only a floor or two, sometimes all the way to the bottom, but without hurt, without bruising hardness.

Until at last he breasted them, he reached the top. There only remained the door now, the door to their tenement flat. He could see it over there from where he was, here.

He picked up his coat. He knew where to go for it. Strange, but he knew where to go for it. The sleeves were white-satin lined, but only before his arms had introduced themselves.

He'd been hurt in some kind of a street fight. It must have been a bad fight. It was starting to run down, now that he was perpendicular. He looked down at the floor, and there were dark polka dots all around him. Like splashes of Marsala wine.

Everything was so hard, even to get the buttons through the buttonholes. The buttons turned sticky after a while, and that made it even harder.

He even took the hat by the brim and gropingly settled it on his head. He had always been nattily dressed, impeccably so, these latter times of affluence and power. He still was, this last time of all. He didn't look in the mirror, though; that was the one thing he didn't do now.

He had difficulty with the door. Getting it open. His own leaning body kept pushing it back again each time. At last he got it to scrape past him all along one side, and that gave it clearance to swing free.

He saw it no more, knew of it no more; he was out in the hall, standing very still, face inward, like a pupil being punished by being made to stand there face to wall. On the threshold where he'd just been, lay a

moistly glittering star, still pulsing with his life-force. Then the pulsing went out of it. A sworl of ruddy shellac remained, like a brush-stroke left by a careless painter.

He began to inch along the wall now, the flats of his hands patting each new place to see if it was there first, then his feet shifting over with a dragging scrape.

Death, pretending to be alive.

Then after a while he'd reached the point at which he'd have to cross in openness, because the elevator was on the other side. Three times he tried it, and three times he came right back to the wall again, to stay up on his feet. And once he kissed it with his lips, as if pleading with it not to abandon him. It seemed to shed a garnet tear over his predicament, which ran down slowly right where he was standing, and then thickened to a stop.

At last he pushed rudely at it, cast it away from him, and on jumbled stiffly-scissoring legs tottered head-low, to come against the matching wall on the opposite side. Journey's end; no more groping, no more staggering, no more fears of leaving the wall. Thick satiny glass was there beside him, and a nubby little push button, easy to find, He pressed it with his thumb. Within moments warm yellow light climbed behind the glass, filled it to its top like a tank. There was a muffled unlatching, and the glass slid away and there was open space before Abbazzia's penitently down-hanging face.

A man was standing at the back of the car, his face down-turned too, a newspaper held open just below it as if to catch it should it fall off out of sheer weariness. And midway between the two of them, a youth with a pillbox cap, too somnolent to look closely at Abbazzia.

Three vagrant people, as unaware of each other as a moment before birth, or a moment after death. Or for that matter, a moment in mid-life.

"Going up?" the boy asked sleepily.

"No," Abbazzia whispered, "going down."

The panel slid closed, and darkness slowly came up in it, pushing the light up out of it.

And as it did so, Abbazzia in turn slowly went down, his palms trailing the glass, lingeringly, to the last.

Then he rolled over very briefly just once on the floor.

Then the spark went out.

And then there was death, the great know-nothing part of life. Or had life perhaps been only the brief know-something part of an endless all-encompassing death?

muted hunger

by Judith Merril

I SHOULD HAVE known something was off beat, when Pete first suggested going to the Horn. We have been married more than two years now, and even when we were still just going together, he had stopped trying to dig my kind of music. Practically everything else that matters to either one of us, we make the scene, together, like—well, it's good. But when it come to music, Pete honestly does not know the difference. I don't mean he doesn't *like* jazz. He just doesn't *dig* it. When we we started going together, he used to call it rock-n-roll, and to this day it still all sounds the same to him—kind of nice. I mean, he likes it *all*.

So it was way back he quit trying to make like a buff. He'll go along any time *I* want to—but he's not the one who'll suggest it—unless, like a birthday or something. So when he walked in and asked if I wanted to run downtown to the Horn after dinner, I should have been suspicious to start with—but all I

This story represents something of a departure for both the author and this magazine. Judith Merril, the distinguished writer and anthologist whose 8th Annual, THE YEAR'S BEST IN SF, has just been published by Simon & Schuster, here describes a different world, very much a part of these times — the world of the "hep" people (not the Kerouac kind . . .) who live according to a code which even aficionados do not always "dig", and who have their own language and ways of phrasing things – and their own mores . . .
H.S.S.

---

thought was, he's getting to read my mind, because I'd been kind of thinking about it myself.

Then when he mentioned this bit about Cindy on the way downtown, I should certainly have known. But of course, he just *mentioned* it. He didn't fill in the picture till later.

The fact is, the first thing I knew anything was the matter was when we walked in—or rather, between the time we walked in and when we got back to a booth. That was maybe two or three minutes, which was time enough for me to hear:—Hippy give out with *most* of a wild clarinet chorus of East of the Moon—that is, we came in just as he started, but nobody heard the last three measures, because Larry cut in too soon with a beautiful lowdown dirty trombone chorus, loud enough so you *almost* didn't notice that the piano was just a jump ahead of him, and the drums just that little bit behind, with neither Art or Tony willing to compromise, so that after a couple of measures, Jimmy stopped even trying to give Larry any backing on the bass, and Jimmy and Hippy began weaving very faint background patterns of pure progressive—behind Larry's tailgate!

What I mean—every man there was blowing for all he was worth—and each of them is worth a lot when they really let out—but, like, there's no band. At the point where we sat down, there were three solos and one duet on the stand, with every man shading it to his own favorite style: New Orleans trombone, West Coast sax and bass (Hippy had switched), Chicago - s w i n g - band - style drums, and a walking bass, boogie type piano.

It has always astonished me to realize that they can do this when there is some kind of beef going on on the stand, and do it just enough to drive each other practically crazy, without ever going quite far enough so that even the *listening* customers quite realize anything is the matter.

But one thing is sure, and that is when those guys start making it tough for each other, there has been trouble, and more will probably follow.

Well, naturally, I thought of Cindy, partly because Pete had just mentioned her before we came in, and *that* was sure enough trouble—but mostly because I hadn't heard the group sounding like that hacked and that good (each one, not *all*) since Cindy quit hanging around the Golden Horn—six months or more.

Actually, w h e n Pete mentioned it in the car, I hadn't had much reaction except, like, *tsk-tsk*. If there was ever a chick who *worked* at getting herself into a mess, big-blue-eyed Cyn-

thia was it. Like, fine innocent type—it says here. The type that can shake everything in opposite directions at the same time, and make it come off like an accident—and then holler *Rape!* if some guy makes a grab for what she's twitching at him.

Pure, 100%, vat-dyed, full-fashioned, phoney, is what I mean—a bitch and a tease. Two months after the first night she came in the place, she had the band practically broke up. Every man in it was out to put every other guy down; every one thought someone else was getting it; and each one had figured some other cat for top man.

I don't know just how she did it. I used to watch her all the time, and I saw it happen, but I could never quite figure it. All I know for sure is that she kept them all shook up for two or three months, and then walked out laughing—and still a virgin.

She hadn't been around much since then: maybe once a month or so, with a date, just to stop in. The guys had had plenty of time to compare notes and realize they'd all been suckered. And there had been some talk around about a character from the Country Club crowd who had finally caught up with her, and then dumped her. I remember telling Pete, when that rumor came around, and the guys were all grinning about it, that I bet it wouldn't take Cindy more than one night at the Horn—*working* at it, I mean—to get every man drooling again.

So now Cindy had bought herself a piece of trouble for sure, and here was the group swinging all out of balance, and the next question was obvious.

All Pete had told me, in the car on the way over, was that she was in the hospital, in bad shape, with internal injuries from a beating up. Assault case, so far: they didn't know yet if it would be rape. I mean, the doctor said she was no longer a virgin, but she hadn't been for a while, and there was no evidence that that part of it had been violent. It looked more like somebody had disapproved of her being too willing.

But whoever did it, or whyever, he really *did* it. The cop who called the ambulance didn't even recognize her, till he looked in her purse. The only thing looked familiar, he said, was the hair, and *that* was dirty and bloodied.

I guess I got some kind of low-minded female kick out of hearing about it, at first. I mean, I felt sorry for her, but—well, not *much*. Like I said, she had been asking for it. I guess any woman who tries to play it straight with men—mostly—has a little bit of the same kind of thing that one of these strict religious types has about who goes to hell. I mean, they figure if they are denying

themselves every kind of fun in life, they don't want to think that the cats who spend all their time balling might get into heaven through some kind of loophole. And I have to admit I got a quick kind of kick out of knowing that a chick who broke all *my* rules like Cindy did, had finally got hers.

Of course, that didn't last. It just flashed through my mind, but I guess it was enough to keep me from asking more, like how was she doing and where she was found—the natural things you'd want to know if it was someone you *cared* about.

But now, hearing the band sounding the way they did made me wonder, and Pete said what he heard was that she was on Critical: she wasn't found until morning, and there'd been a lot of internal bleeding already; they thought it had happened about four o'clock; and she hadn't been conscious enough to be questioned at all.

I was just going to ask where they found her, when Pete saw somebody down at the bar that he had to talk to. "Right back, babe," he said, and took off, and I started listening again.

Same kind of mess. A few bars of beautiful way out music from here or there, and then someone would ruin the tempo, or cut it or something. It was a relief, when they played the set ender.

Jimmy and Hippy were first off the stand, and they collected their drinks and came over to say hello.

I am the devious type, so the first thing I said was, "You hear about Cindy?"

"What about her?" says Hippy, and Jimmy says, "She was in last night."

"Here?" Things began to fall into place in my mind.

"Yeah. Most of the night, wasn't she?" he asked Hip, *real* cool, like—just as if he didn't know exactly when she arrived, what time she cut and with whom.

Which, I realized, might be important to know.

So I told them as much as I knew, and Hippy surprised me. "So somebody finally got *too* hacked?" he said, which made Jimmy's phoney "Damn shame!" sound like just what it was.

Then Hippy called Larry over and told him, and Larry said, "Yeah, I heard," like, what could possibly interest him less?

I was beginning to feel distinctly peculiar, and I wished Pete would come back, but at the same time, if my hunch was right, I was kind of burned with him too. So I said, "Did she stay late?" and waited, and wouldn't you know? Not one of them noticed when she took off.

Naturally.

Larry drifted off and I saw him talking to Tony and Art, and then they all came back

over, and Art says, "What's this I hear about lover-girl?"

So I went through the story again, what I knew of it, and then Tony threw in his bit: "I'll be damned. I almost made a try at that again last night. Maybe I should of. If she stuck around, maybe . . ."

Well, that answered my other question: she'd been alone, so I asked the first one again. "You know when she left, Art?"

He shook his head, frowning. "No. We were swingin' for a while there the end of the night, an' I never noticed. One time she was still there, and then I looked up when it was all over and she'd gone. Any of you guys notice . . .?"

And each one of them looked very thoughtful, and not one of them had just happened to notice, and it was just about as *wrong* as it could be. I mean, I have been with those guys when they talked to, like, *customers*, and anything one of them says, the rest go along, and they get that certain happy-man look on their faces, like, "Me hipster, who you?" which is strictly for the public, and the only thing the *won't* say is anything they mean. And that's just the way they were now, just as if they thought I'd never know the difference. And then of course, Art looked at his watch and looked real startled, and said, "Hey, we're overdue," and they took off just in time not to meet Pete coming back. Who looked at me, and said, "What's the matter hon?"

Well, I was hacked. I don't like being treated like one of the crows. And I was bothered, because what were they covering, anyhow? And I wished to hell I didn't have to say anything to Pete, and what could I do? So I just kind of mumbled, and of course, being Pete, he knew exactly what I was feeling, and could guess pretty well why, so then he told me the rest of it—how Old Charlie found her there on the floor that morning, and how she'd lost so much blood by then, she might still die, *and* that Old Charlie said Phil—the owner—had gone home right at closing time, and left him to close up the place, and then this session started, and Charlie didn't feel like sitting around and didn't want to stop the guys, so he asked Art, who is the leader, if he would lock up when they quit, and he split.

And Cindy was still there when he left, and she was the only one who was still there besides the guys. Charlie figured she was going home with one of them, and didn't give it another thought.

So after he left, and the doors were locked from the outside, and the guys were all blowing, she was still there, and she was here in the morning, all messed

up, and the guys were just saying she must have cut out while they were playing, because she was gone when they quit. But Art locked up again when *they* left, so she couldn't get back in, and—

And that was when I *really* started to burn.

"So that's why we're having us a big night out?" I demanded.

"Why, I thought you were the type of girl who'd *want* to help her husband with his work," he said, and it was not a good time to make jokes. I explained that to him. He got more serious, and said, what the hell, maybe I didn't like the girl, but she was still entitled to some protection by the forces of law and order.

Well, I didn't much care for his tone, but I couldn't really argue with him. Cindy was asking to get herself put down all right—but not like getting killed or right next door to it. And cops-and-killers is not a game you can play by the charts, so I knew the answer to my next question before I asked it—but I asked anyhow.

"Okay, but why *you*?"

"Not me, specially. Really *you*."

"Well, then, the least you could have done was tell me to start with."

"Could I?"

He was right. I wouldn't have gone, if I'd known why. But I had a right to decide for myself. The P.D. was not paying *me*, and I was about to make some snappy comment to that effect, when I realized that they were sure as hell paying Pete, and that one of the things a detective does to earn the difference between his paycheck and a patrolman's is have connections to use at the right time. How much more could a man get that with his wife—who, incidentally, lives off the same paycheck. So okay. He had to cut this gig, and I had to help, but I did not have to like it, and it wasn't as smart thinking as some brassass up there must have thought it was. The guys knew the score too, and they'd have to know where I stood—where I had to stand—without anybody to spell it out for them. If the whole bunch was covering for one of them, no one was going to hand *me* the word.

I felt better. I had to help, sure—but that didn't mean I had to work overtime at it. And from the results up to that point, it would take more than just opening my ears up to find out anything.

Besides which, it *couldn't* be one of the guys in the band. I knew them all too well. I loved them all. It couldn't be—only, if it wasn't, who was it? And, more important, why were they all covering? Or whom? Because they were sure as hell coming on too strong.

I thought of things like, maybe she was in the john and they didn't know it, but then—who else was there, or who got in afterwards, or how? Phil and Charlie had keys—well, so did Art. Maybe some other people. Who knows? But even while I was trying to think up all the crazy things that *might* have happened, I kept remembering that the guys were all lying. If it wasn't one of them, they knew who it was. And if it *wasn't* one of them, *why* were they covering?

I started trying to talk it out to Pete, which was tough enough anyhow with all the mixed-up things I was feeling about it, and twice as tough because the boys had got on a dixie kick all of a sudden, and like it was *loud* in there. But Pete put his head down and listened, at least as much as he could catch, and then when I ran down he said, "Look, babe, if it was just to figure out, I wouldn't have dragged you into it. This may be hard to believe, but I did not marry you for your keen logical brain. The one big thing you already told me was that they're putting on. You know me, I'm Joe Public himself, and these boys are pros when it comes to conning the public. I would have believed them, when they all backed each other up. So you knew better. You didn't have to *think* it out. You just know *them*, and how they think and feel and what all their cons are like. That's why I needed you."

"So get me a crystal ball," I snapped at him. "What do you want me to do, shut my eyes and point, and say, *'He* done it—that one there!?"

He grinned and after a while I did too. I knew what he meant. I'd tried to explain it to him often enough, God knows. It's what you mean when you say, somebody *digs*. It's not like telepathy or anything—it's just—well, you do or you don't. I do. Pete doesn't. So he figured I might dig this for him.

Only I didn't *want* to.

Anyhow, they don't usually play much two-beat, and I am personally very fond of it, and now they started Back Home in Indiana, and I told Pete, almost like normal, "Shut up, square, and leave me listen." And I started paying attention to the band.

I guess I was halfway convinced I was going to refuse to do anymore. I didn't like getting put in the middle. I was going to listen a while and then ask to go home. But as soon as I started to concentrate on the music, I knew that was not how it would be.

You might say I was brought up on jazz. Jake Kendall was my father, and any musician around here will still tell you he was the

best bass man they ever heard outside New York. Even the younger men, the guys who only dig modern, never put Jake down. They all listened to him when they were learning, and most of them learned from him too. Pop understood more about jazz than any. random dozen buffs or experts ever will. He felt it, and when people heard him, they felt it too. I don't mean he was one of your colorful so-called "naturals". He knew music, and he could play a job off charts with anybody. Most of his playing was just with dance bands, but right up to the day he died, you knew if there was a session going anyplace inside of twenty-five miles, it was ten to one Pop was there.

Two reasons: first, it was what he lived on, more than food, or family, or anything. And second, as soon as anything started, the first thing the guys would do was yell for someone to call up Jake. Most people don't know how much a group depends on its bass. And there are a couple of good bassmen around here, I'm not putting them down, they're good *musicians*. But Pop was a jazzman.

There were two things he used to say, like if we were listening to records, and something really got to him. He'd start nodding, and tapping his hand on his chair, or on his thigh, or when I was little and used to sit curled up against him, on my head or my back. And then, if what he was liking was the rhythm section, he'd say, after a while, "That's how rhythm should be. You got to *feel* it, not just *hear* it." And if it was the front line, if it was a way out horn or piano that had caught him, he'd say, "Listen, o-bug, listen—he's telling a story—you hear that?—he's telling a story. He's telling all his troubles. You hear that?"

Well, I didn't know then about the troubles Pop had to tell about. But I learned to hear what the horns were saying, and to know if they didn't say anything at all, and then I got to know pretty well what the piano man meant (which is harder—they can fake more), and finally even to know the difference in what the drums or the bass said, what kind of story they told.

Now there's just so much of what I mean that's going to make sense in *words*. Maybe if it was the kind of thing people could say in words, there wouldn't be any such thing as jazz. Or maybe some people can say it in words, but what I mean is what is way on the inside, underneath all the words and the manners and really, underneath the story—I mean, whatever the musician is telling about, the story he's telling, is not a straight story of *what* happened, but *how*, and mostly how he was feeling, while the

things were happening, whatever they were.

Well, I said to start with, I knew there was some kind of hassle inside the band as soon as we came in, because of the way they were swinging, but not together. You have to understand—those guys played together for a long time, off and on, at least. The only one who's halfway new is Jim; he joined when Pop died, and of course he's a lot younger than the rest of them. But of course he grew up with it too, and he learned from Pop to begin with, so even though he'd really rather play with a more modern group, he digs Art's style enough to have worked in with them pretty quickly—and it's been three-four years now, anyhow.

The main thing is (and this is why Jim stays with them, and Hippy too, because he also digs modern more than the swing-era, Basie type that the band mostly plays)—those five men are just about the best musicians anywhere in the area, and absolutely the best jazzmen any place around. They know it, and they dig each other. So even on a dull night, when no one of them is doing anything special, they still come out sounding damn good as a whole. They almost can't help working in right together. They get so they practically read minds, with each guy knowing just what the others will do next.

Once in a while, of course, one of them will come out—like, *way* out—with some completely new idea, and then the others just fall back and let him ride, until they figure the pattern, and then the next chorus they'll start to give him some backing.

And of course, when one guy is feeling good, it's just as likely as not to be catching, and when *that* happens, you're likely to get the kind of session they were trying to tell me they'd had the night before. And when they are really swinging like that, a dozen Cindy's could probably walk in and out, or even get raped right in front of the bandstand, and they might not know it. There *are* times like that.

But the night before hadn't been one of them. Two reasons: First, if it had been, they wouldn't have just *told* me so. They'd have been trying to remember some solo of Hippy's, or beating out the pattern Tony and Jim had worked out on something. But more important—the night after a session like that, I've only heard it go two ways. Either they're still on the kick, or they're off it. They're dead.

And this time, I told you how it was: everyone blowing like crazy—but crazy, just like when Cindy was under their skins, and the band almost broke up—or like any time they were all

charged up, but from some kind of hassle, from some beef between them—not from a swinging session the night before.

Well, I got started thinking about some of the beefs I knew they had had—long before Cindy—and I remembered thinking earlier that none of those guys *could* have done that to her—and I wasn't so sure anymore.

When I was a teenager, and I started to find out what had actually happened with my mother and father, I was all on Jake's side. Jim was too, I guess, but he was the one on the outside, romantic and fascinating. Mom was okay, but—*square*. We dug Jake, and he dug us.

And I guess, till that night, I never really believed that maybe Mom had something on her side after all. These guys, the jazzmen, they're great, they're the most. They're exciting and fun and interesting, and I still do dig them—all the way—but—

Well, they're not really, generally, very *nice* guys.

Believe it or not, I'd never realized that before. It made me, like, move over closer to Pete, who is solid and nice and—it shook me when I thought of it, not just joking, the way I'd thought it before—*very* square. I guess people like me need people like him? Or people like him—and Mom—need people like me—and Pop?

Could be. All the same, Pop was running around and boozing it up, and sometimes staying out all night. Mostly at jam sessions—probably. But she could never be sure, and after a while the strain began to show, and she got kind of whiney and shrill, and then she began checking up on him and *he* flipped, and then . . .

That was when the weekend afternoons at *his* house started, the ones I remember so happily, listening to records.

And Pop was not the only one, not even the worst by a long shot. Every man there was some kind of a flip, and I don't mean just the other four, but my brother James too; and for that matter, the owner, Phil, who used to play great trumpet years back till he lost his lip, and all the others I knew who could not leave the charts alone, who wouldn't settle for playing the tune the way it was written. If they're that way with music, I guess they are that way with life?

Like, Phil: I was too young to be listening then, but I've heard them all talk about it—how his lip started to go, and one night he couldn't kid himself any longer, and he all of a sudden threw the horn on the floor and started jumping up and down on it, and it took four guys to quiet him down, none of them looked so good afterwards either. He went off his rocker completely for a

while, and then, I guess he just calmed down eventually. But for years he couldn't stand even to listen to a jazz tune on the radio. Of course, that was way back, and he was all over it—obviously—before he bought the Golden Horn and started turning it into a jazz place.

Or Art: It's funny, you grow up used to something and if you heard the same thing about a stranger it would seem *awful.* But I got warned about Art, in a casual way, by Jake himself, when I started developing, and I've just sort of always known how the guys keep an eye on him and make sure he doesn't get into trouble again with the younger girls. Come to think of it, I don't think even his wife ever knew about the time they weren't watching him; but *we* knew, all of us on the inside—all us *hip* ones.

Or Hippy, who's maybe the most ordinary, because all he does is drink. Like all the time.

Or Larry: I think it's his fourth marriage he's working on now—if he's still working at it. And that doesn't count the ones he didn't bother to marry.

There's another guy who sits in sometimes, who spent ten years in jail for robbery—that's where he learned to play drums, in fact.

And I could go on. But I won't. That's right, the one I left out was Jim, and he's my brother, and I know what his problems are too, and they have nothing to do with this story.

At least, that's what I thought as I ran down the list in my mind, and then I started to wonder, because the more I listened, the more I had to recognize that out of all the *wrongness* up there, the wrongest part was the bass.

A bassman isn't supposed to be *heard* all the time: I mean, not out front center. And certainly not doing, for heaven's sake *counter* point all the time. The others all sounded troubled and hacked and nervous and ready to jump at anything. But the way Jim was playing was different, somehow—like not *caring.* I don't mean uninterested, I mean don't-give-a-damn-so-who-cares-? Happy, almost—and to hell with the world, I've got mine. It didn't sound like Jim, but the actual music was Jim at his best—very personal, full of ideas, and all that. Just, he didn't seem to be in the hassle at all; he'd just sort of dismissed it—whatever it was.

It took me a while to figure that out. Then when I got it, I wished I hadn't. I didn't want to look at Pete, or let him see my face, because I knew it would show.

But of course all the time I was sitting there, listening hard, and remembering, and feeling for what each one of the guys

was saying, what kind of crazy mixed-up story all their stories added up to—all that time, of course, Pete was just sitting back, digging *me*.

So just about the time I started thinking how to get up and say I wanted to go home, without letting him see my face, he said:

"Listen, babe, if it hurts that much, you better let me in on it."

I just shook my head. I wouldn't—

I had to. Pete is my husband. Jim is my brother, but—Pete is my husband. And anyhow, I could easy be wrong.

I stood up. "See you around chum," I said, and the blessed man had sense enough to sit still and leave it to Jo.

I went and stood right near the stand, and when the set ended, I latched onto Jim.

We went out back and talked, and when we came back in, I found I was breathing again. I was right, all right—but I was wrong. Thank God.

I asked Pete if they'd checked on all the people who had keys. He said, yes—but they couldn't push the verifications on stories too hard yet. If she died, well—until then, they had to accept statements and alibis. Or until they had some evidence to go on.

I told him what Jimmy had told me, and what I'd remembered when I was thinking about what flips they all were. And of course it was obvious.

What Jim had said was just that Cindy had been a very different girl that night. She wasn't kidding, or teasing. She meant business, and they all knew it, the way men do. And pretty soon they all knew who she had tagged too, and there was some agony about that, but it stood to reason, really, and no one was *too* hacked.

Jim is the youngest, and a good looking guy, and—well, Cindy had heard some stories about him and how he is with the girls, and it seems she had developed a taste for—let's say, for rough handling.

But she made a mistake, letting him see what she wanted. That's not the way to get at him. He laughed at her. Then he turned around and said, loud, to the other guys: "Who wants it?" Then he picked up the bass case and walked out.

He told it to me, like for laughs. Which was sickening, but one big relief, because it rang too damn true, for Jim.

I don't know yet whether Cindy would have got off home free, if Jim had said yes. I think maybe so. I don't think anyone would have enraged Phil as much as Larry—the horn man who took *his* place in the band.

Phil broke down as soon as

they started really questioning him. He had left, like he always did, when he felt the guys were going to stay and blow just for themselves. He had left, and Cindy had said that she would leave with him.

Except, she said, she didn't want to start talk. She'd meet him up at the end of the block, was what she said.

When he left, he saw she'd already gone. But she hadn't. She was in the ladies' room, waiting.

Phil waited up on the corner a half hour, maybe. Then he drove p a s t her house, and couldn't tell from the lights or cars there whether she had gone home or not. Then he spent maybe another half hour touring the town—all the spots where she might have gone with someone else. Then, restless and angry and frustrated, he drove back to the Horn, to the back door, and looked in and saw her there, dancing alone on the floor in front of the stand, all the guys watching, hungry.

He saw her go up to Jim and saw him shrug. He watched while they quit playing, started to pack up. He saw and heard the exchange between Cindy and Jim; and then, he ducked back in the shadows while Jim came out and drove away; Hip and Tony came out and left; Art left; and then there were noises, and Phil crept back to watch, and even walked inside, and into the men's john, and stood there, holding the door open a crack, watching it all. They never knew he was there, not till the end. Then he came out and told Larry, "Get out of here."

Then he started to call Cindy names, and Larry left, and—all the rest happened.

But next time Pete asks me to go to the Horn, I'll think twice. They would never have cracked that band's united front any other way. Just, Jimmy thought I already knew, when I reminded him what Jake had said about telling a story. So he told me his part, and then I did know the rest.

The trouble is, it was just because I dig them. And because I do—I'm damned if I can see that one Phil, who did something while he still could, who *made* something out of a horn and his hands and his mind and his breath—I can't see that one Phil is worth a dozen Cindy's. Let alone just one of her.

Next time my husband wants to go listen to jazz, I'll stay home.

LESLIE CHARTERIS'

The Saint on TV

ROGER MOORE to star in 39 one hour series. . .

It has been a long wait.

Scores of producers and stars have spent years trying to persuade Leslie Charteris that the Saint should be on TV, but in each and every case, remembering what they had perpetrated up to then, he has turned a doubting eye on them and refused the offer. But now at long last, he has agreed to this new ITC series of thirty-nine one-hour productions starring Roger Moore which will be seen beginning this Fall.

It is an understatement to say that the Saint has been a popular character for years. There have been over three dozen Saint books. More than twenty-two million copies of these books have been sold and both books and short-stories have been translated — and are still being translated — into almost every European language. Featured in numerous films, on radio, in newspaper strips, and in this magazine and in our foreign editions, the Saint is today an internationally known personality, whose latest adventure is awaited as eagerly as the early adventures were years ago. In London and Paris and the Hague and Rio de Janeiro, in Spain and Viet-Nam, in South Africa and in Alaska, Simon Templar is therefore a familiar friend. It was precisely for this reason that the author hesitated so long before agreeing to this series.

When producers Robert S. Baker and Monty Berman came to set up production for the television series they found themselves with rights in a hundred and ten stories from which they could choose. The problem wasn't to find enough subjects, but to make up their minds which ones to use. Each one of the stories, they soon realized, pos-

sessed all the ingredients for a first-rate film. They had enough material, obviously, for several series if need be. Not one of the stories chosen for the series has been seen in drama form before this.

Simon Templar, as we've already said, is such a well identified personality that, before agreeing to part with the television rights, Charteris had to be satisfied that the character of the Saint would not be changed in any way. He also insisted that only his own stories should be used. Each episode in the series is therefore from Leslie Charteris' own pen, adapted for television under the script-editorship of the internationally

Leslie Charteris

famous Harry W. Junkin, who has written nearly seven hundred television scripts.

Each "Saint" episode is produced on a lavish scale. No effort has been spared to translate the world which Simon Templar knows to the television screens. The stories take place all over the world — in New York, London, Miami, Paris, Rome, Geneva, the Bahamas, Southern Spain, Canada and elsewhere — wherever Simon Templar has found himself, wherever he has felt that famiilar delighted tingling as he has faced still another adventure, still another opportunity to bring discomfort to the ungodly — or to bring fresh life and hope to still others.

Describing this personality that is the Saint, Leslie Charteris has written:

"I have been trying to make a picture of a man. Changing, yes. Developing, I hope. He is a roaring adventurer who loves

Roger Moore

a fight . . . . a dashing dare-devil, imperturbable, debonair, preposerously handsome, a pirate or a philanthropist as the occasion demands. He lives for the pursuit of excitement . . . for the one

Continued on Page 72

the case of s. w. 2

by Julian Symons

"PREPOSTEROUS," Francis Quarles said as he allowed himself to be hustled out of his office by young Mr. Hurley. "Ridiculous," he said as he lowered his bulky body into the back seat of an unobtrusive but luxurious car. Young Mr. Hurley murmured something to the driver and then got into a seat opposite Quarles.

"I do assure you sir," he said, "that I would explain the position if I were allowed to. It really is an exceptional case, and important people are involved in it. I was given instructions to more or less kidnap you if necessary."

He was a fair-haired, open-faced young man who seemed to maintain an appearance of gravity only by an effort. "That may sound absurd," he added.

"I am in no doubt as to your energy," Quarles assured him. "And I am sure you would regard a kidnapping merely as something in the run of the day's work. But I should be happy to

---

Julian Symons, author of PLAIN MAN (H&R), BLAND BEGINNING, THE THIRTY-FIRST OF FEBRUARY, etc., etc., "a poet by preference and a book reviewer by force of economic pressure", once wrote, some ten years ago, now what he wanted to do was to write a book "which can be read with interest as a first class novel and also has the thriller's excitement, and perhaps the puzzle element of a detective story, too."

Originally published in the London Evening Standard, March 8, 1950.
Reprinted by permisson of the London Express News and Feature Servces.

know some details of the matter of life and death on which you wish to consult me."

"I'm sorry, sir. It's not my story." Young Mr. Hurley blushed. "Though in a sense it's only too much my story."

"And the important people involved."

Young Mr. Hurley mentioned a name, and it was the name of a very important person indeed. After that there was silence until they reached their destination in Pall Mall.

Here Mr. Hurley hustled and bustled Quarles up marble steps, through an entrance hall and into a lift. He asked Quarles to wait and rushed away down a corridor. A few moments later he was back and shepherding Quarles into a room where a man sat behind a large desk.

Quarles had never met the man but he had seen his photograph many times in the newspapers. He was the very important person—one of the most important Ministers of the day—mentioned by Hurley in the car.

"Mr. Quarles, I owe you a personal apology for bringing you here in this unorthodox way. But the situation didn't allow for convention. I am calling on your help as a citizen, Mr. Quarles, in a national emergency.

"Three days ago," the Minister said "a document of vital importance to the national safety was stolen from Hurley." He made a gesture towards the young man who stood like a watchdog by the door.

"It was a minute sent to me by a certain department. It gave details of the steps that are being taken in this country for the manufacture, should it be necessary of a particular weapon of warfare. The weapon is at present secret. It is known as S.W.2."

"And you want me to discover the thief?"

"No, No, Mr. Quarles." The Minister was almost impatient. "I thought Hurley might have told you that much. The thief is a man named Zelblec. We want you to recover the document."

The Minister gazed straight at Quarles as he added: "Illegally, if necessary."

Quarles sat back. "You had better tell me about it."

Three days before, on Monday of that week, the Minister had instructed Hurley to bring down the S.W.2 minute to the Watermead in Norfolk, where he was taking a holiday which included a conference with certain allied diplomats and military men.

Hurley had received a telephone call just after he had taken the S.W.2. minute, in its sealed envelope, out of the safe in the Minister's room. The call purported to come from the staff of one of the allies with whom

the Minister was conferring, and the caller mentioned the S.W.2 minute by name.

The caller said that his name was Robins, and that he was speaking from the Minister's house. He and Hurley talked amiably for a minute or two, but Hurley became suspicious when Robins asked casually about the train on which he was travelling, so that he could be met at Watermead Station. Hurley asked to speak to the Minister, and the line went dead.

"Just a moment," Quarles said. "How many people know about the S.W.2 minute?"

The Minister shook his head. "Too many for us to make any check by that means."

"And where was it while you were telephoning?" Quarles asked Hurley.

The young man flushed uneasily. "In the Minister's room next door. But it was in exactly the same place on the desk when I returned."

The Minister was tapping his desk with a broad flat fingernail. "I told you, Mr. Quarles, that we know the name of the thief. We also know how and where the theft was committed, if you would kindly listen."

Hurley, his suspicions roused, tried to ring the Minister at Watermead, but failed to reach him. (It was discovered later that the wires had been cut.)

He took an earlier train instead of the one he had planned, telling the Minister's assistant secretary Macpherson to get this information through as soon as possible. A few minutes later Macpherson, still unable to get through, sent a wire in code for urgent delivery. Hurley then boarded the train—

"Tell him about Macpherson," said the irrepressible Hurley. The Minister frowned.

"That has nothing to do with it."

"It was a damned odd thing to happen, sir," Hurley said to Quarles: "Macpherson went out after sending that code message and was knocked over by a hit-and-run driver almost as soon as he was out of the door. Near enough killed—they brought him in here and he's been unconscious ever since. Chap didn't stop, nobody got his number."

"Hurley," said the Minister, and young Hurley, unabashed, said, "Sorry, sir."

Hurley boarded the train, the Minister resumed, carrying the S.W.2 minute in his brown briefcase. There was nobody in his carriage, but an amiable foreign gentleman sat opposite him at lunch.

This gentleman must have managed to drop something potent into Hurley's coffee for on his return to the carriage Hurley felt extraordinarily sleepy. He fell asleep and when he woke had travelled some distance be-

yond Watermead.

On the rack above him was a brown briefcase—but it was not Hurley's briefcase, and it contained only wads of newspaper. His briefcase, with the S.W.2 minute in it, had gone.

The Minister told the end of this story almost with a grim relish, his eye firmly fixed on Hurley, who wriggled with embarrassment. When Hurley was shown a number of photographs of well-known agents he unhesitatingly picked out the picture of a man named Zelblec as that of the man who had sat opposite him at lunch.

"And Zelblec is an agent?" The Minister nodded. "For what Power?"

"My dear Mr. Quarles," the Minister said in a tone of some superiority, "Zelblec has no national patriotism of any kind. He simply works for those who pay him. He has even worked for us."

"Why don't you arrest him?"

"On what charge? Drinking coffee with Hurley?" The Minister leaned his large body forward. "But there is another reason.

"You understand that I can name no names, but we believe—we know—the Power most likely to be employing Zelblec. Now here is the interesting thing. We have means of knowing also that the S.W.2 minute has not reached them.

"More—Zelblec has not been in touch with them, nor with anyone else l i k e l y to be interested. For some reason of his own, he is playing a waiting game.

"That gives us a chance to send somebody to see him. Since the prime purpose of the visit is to regain the document—by any means that seem suitable, Mr. Quarles—obviously he cannot be official."

"One thing strikes me," said Quarles. "Why doesn't Zelblec make half a dozen copies of this minute and sell it in a half a dozen places?"

"Because he wants to stay alive," the Minister said grimly. "Well, Mr. Quarles—." He rose. Again young Hurley was unable to repress himself.

"The burglary, sir. You haven't told him about the burglary."

"Nothing to do with it," the Minister said impatiently.

Quarles asked: "What burglary," and it was young Hurley who replied.

"Last night, just after midnight, somebody tried to get in here—not into the offices, but the living quarters. Cut a pane of glass and came in through the window. Fortunately, the night watchman Jones was alert and spotted the chap before he could do any damage. Didn't catch him, though."

The Minister looked rather ostentatiously at his watch, and

shot out a hand. "Good luck, Mr. Quarles."

Zelblec, a squat man with powerful shoulders, a completely bald head and an almost perpetual smile, lived in a neat semi-detached house at Worcester Park. He was in the garden pruning rose bushes when Quarles pushed open the little wooden gate.

Quarles had decided that the element of surprise was not important. He had telephoned for an appointment, mentioning "a certain document," and Zelblec led him inside the house, where a pretty girl, introduced as the agent's daughter, gave them iced coffee.

Quite bluntly Quarles stated his case. Zelblec was in possession of a document. What was he prepared to accept for it?

"Permit me to ask, Mr. Quarles," Zelblec said with his perpetual small smile, "for whom are you acting? Do not say for yourself. That would be too ridiculous."

Quarles sipped his iced coffee. "There is no reason why I should conceal from you that I am an agent of the British Government."

"And supposing I am in possession of this document you require—which I do not admit for a moment—what can you offer for it?"

"What would you say to a hundred thousand pounds?"

Behind the smile Zelblec seemed disturbed. "You mean that?"

"Certainly. You will not suppose," Quarles chuckled, "that I have brought the money with me. But I can obtain it in two hours. Of course you have the document."

There was the faintest possible hesitation before Zelblec said: "Of course."

"And you will let me see it." Zelblec shook his bald head.

"My dear Mr. Zelblec, you can satisfy yourself that I am unarmed. I will stand with my hands above my head and you can cover me with the revolver which I see is unsettling the fit of your jacket. All I ask is that you let me see the document in question."

Zelblec wiped away perspiration from his forehead. "No," he said. And then: "Is it that important to you? A hundred thousand pounds."

"You should know the importance of the document, Mr. Zelblec. Or don't you know?" Quarles said tauntingly: "Are you *unable* to show it to me?"

The smile on Zelblec's face was suddenly wiped out. The revolver Quarles had mentioned was in his hand. "Get out," he said.

"Thank you." Quarles stood up. "You have been most helpful." He got out.

The Minister contemplated Quarles with no particular friendliness. "You have not got the minute?" Quarles shook his head. "You have failed?" Quarles shook his head again and said to young Hurley. "Why are you wearing a black tie?"

"Poor old Macpherson—remember I told you he was knocked over by a hit-and-run driver—died this morning. Never recovered consciousness."

"Died!" Quarles said. "What have you done with his clothes? The ones he was wearing at the time of the accident?"

"Why, I don't know—they were in his room—"

"Where's his room?" A bewildered Hurley led Quarles up two flights of stairs and into a room where something lay on a bed covered with a sheet.

On a chair was a bloodstained grey suit. Quarles felt in it rapidly. "There should be—ah yes, here it is. A secret pocket in the lining."

He took a knife from his pocket. "And here—" he slit the lining and produced a long envelope, "—is Minute S.W.2."

Hurley gasped and looked at the thing on the bed. "But *Macpherson—*"

"Yes," said Quarles. "Macpherson."

"It was a simple but ingenious plot," Quarles said to a remarkably subdued Hurley and an attentive Minister, "with two strings to it. First of all there was Macpherson, prepared with an envelope, all ready to make the substitution here if possible. Then there was Zelblec if Macpherson failed.

"But Macpherson didn't fail. The S.W.2 minute was stolen by him, and the other envelope substituted, while Hurley was occupied with that telephone call.

"Then to remove suspicion from Macpherson Zelblec went solemnly through the farce of doping Hurley's coffee and taking his briefcase, thereby identifying himself as the thief. In the meantime Macpherson went out to hand over the minute —and was knocked down by a car and brought back here."

"I don't see how you worked it out," Hurley said.

"Two things. First—if Zelblec had the minute, why hadn't it reached the Power for whom he was acting? Could it be because he hadn't got it? That something had gone wrong?

"To test this I offered Zelblec a fantastic sum of money for the document when I saw him, *providing he could produce it.* If he were really holding it to sell to the highest bidder, as you suggested that offer must tempt him.

"But he couldn't produce the minute. And he hadn't passed it on.

"I asked myself then who else could have stolen it. It could have been Hurley." Hurley started. "But if Hurley had stolen the minute and faked his doping there was no reason why he shouldn't have passed on the minute immediately.

"So I was left with only one answer to my questions: who could (a) have stolen the minute and (b) have been unable, through some unforeseen event, to pass it on.

"I remembered Macpherson's accident, I remembered the attempt at burglary—to get the minute from Macpherson's clothing, of course, when they found out what had happened to him—and I knew that logically the minute must be somewhere in Macpherson's clothing. And there it was."

"One thing you haven't explained Mr. Quarles," the Minister said. "Who was the hit-and-run driver?"

"In all the circumstances," Quarles said, "I think you might say his name was Providence."

The Saint on TV

continued from Page 65

triumphant moment that is his alone.

"Fantastic? Improbable? . . . . Perhaps It doesn't matter so much so long as you feel you would recognize him if you met him tomorrow."

Simon Templar is lean, very tall, well able to look after himself. His manner is deceptively lazy. So is his voice. He appeals to women — and women appeal to him.

Portraying this personality is a *tour-de-force* for Roger Moore, the young English actor who found stardom in Hollywood and recently took over the lead in the "Maverick" TV series. Long anxious to portray the Saint, he was delighted when he was approached with the offer to take the title role, once plans were completed for the series. He is supported by some of Britain's finest actors — and, in particular, glamorous girls. But more about this in the months to come.

"The Saint", starring Roger Moore, will be seen in your area beginning this Fall. Check with your local TV station on when the series will begin. And look forward to thirty-nine exciting one-hour films about the Saint who, for so many years, has meant adventure and suspense and excitement — and pleasure for so many of us.

syndicate bait

by Paul W. Fairman

"May I sit here?" the meticulously clad gentleman asked.

"Sure, pally, sure. Take the load off," Coster replied heartily.

The man sat down and then appeared to regret his decision. Perhaps this was because, with the light rather dim in the cocktail lounge, he hadn't gotten a very good look at Coster's face.

It was a battleground, rather than a visage; the place where Coster carried souvenirs of past experiences. The knife slashes on either cheek were for not keeping his mouth shut in St. Louis that time. The mashed-potato effect on his left ear had been produced with a short-handled baseball bat in Chicago; with the hope that it would improve his hearing relative to orders from the boys up above. It hadn't. The cleft across the bridge of his nose was in memory of an argument about percentages in Las Vegas.

The gentleman glanced around regretfully. There were seats at other tables even though the lounge was rather crowded. He accepted Coster's invitation

What ARE these men like who have this unusual profession? James Reach explored the question in his THE SPECIALIST (SMM, Aug. 1963) and now Paul W. Fairman, writer and editor, long active in this field, also explores ths question of how these inheritors of traditions antedating the Borgias, behave.

however and sat down opposite him.

"You local?" Coster asked.

The gravel-throated question appeared to startle the man. "Local?"

"From here in town?"

"Oh, no. I'm just passing through. Thought I'd have a nightcap before bed."

Coster's grin showed the broken teeth he'd acquired here and there around the country. "Nobody wears 'em anymore, pally, but if it's a drink you want. It's on me."

The man cringed, his throat working slightly as though he'd had a hard time swallowing Coster's humor.

Coster growled, "Hey girlie," to the waitress and then asked, "What'll you have pally?"

"Ah—oh, my—whatever you're drinking will be quite alright."

"Two more dry martinis, sister." Then, as the waitress moved away, Coster leaned across the table and said, "Sitting with me could be dangerous, pally."

The man's throat movement was a genuine gulp this time. "Dangerous?"

This amused Coster. "See that guy over there?" He jerked his head to the right and slightly rearward.

The man looked. "Yes," he said doubtfully.

"He's got a contract on me. I'm Syndicate bait."

The man took a cigarette from a silver case he laid on the table. He was smiling now. "Oh, I see. You're pulling my leg."

Coster was mystified. "I'm doing what?"

"Joking. In your parlance, kidding me."

"I ain't kidding, buster."

"Finch," the man corrected. "Samuel Finch. But the Syndicate. Why, it's fiction. A myth. A melodramatic invention created by the TV chaps."

"Don't kid yourself, pally. The Syndicate's just as real today as when Capone used to run it." Coster peered across the table. "Say, where you from?"

"I'm a British subject," Finch said primly. Again he glanced apprehensively back off Coster's right shoulder. "British, so of course I wouldn't know much about your native forms of lawlessness."

"Native? You mean strictly U. S. A.? Hell, the Syndicate's tied in with the Mafia. They're all over the world."

"Preposterous."

Coster's eyes followed Finch's. He grinned. "Not him. Not the guy in the gray suit. The one in blue."

"How on earth can you tell the difference?"

"I can spot a Syndicate gun three blocks away. That's how I keep alive. They got one on me all the time." He shrugged. "The other guy's a salesman. He's try-

ing to make that blonde at the bar."

Finch eyed Blue Suit apprehensively but still appeared doubtful. "It taxes one's credulity to—"

"If that means you don't believe it, you ought to open your stupid eyes and ears, buster, and find out what's going on."

Coster's words were caustic enough to stir resentment but his tone took most of the sting out of them. He was in almost a jovial mood. This, Finch noted; an attitude that only added to his apparent confusion.

"Very well," he said almost defiantly after he sipped delicately at his glass. "If your Syndicate does exist, exactly what kind of an organization is it?"

"Coster grinned evilly. "You mean do they have offices like General Motors and Ford? Sure, but they don't advertise." This struck Coster as funny. He guffawed at his own wit. "Uh-huh, they don't advertise. That's funny."

"Indeed it is," Finch agreed. Reacting as would any well bred person, he glanced around, embarrassed by Coster's coarseness. No one but the man in blue paid any attention. Finch sipped nervously at his drink as the eyes of the man in blue held cold and steady on Coster's shoulder.

But it seemed that Coster could not possibly have cared less. He downed half his martini in a single swallow and commented, "The blond ain't having any."

In contrast, the blonde did not interest Mr. Finch. He stared at the man in blue with the fascination of a bird eyeing a snake and said, "Some of your American terminology is confusing. You called yourself *bait*. Does that mean you're acting as a decoy in some Syndicate operation?"

"It means they're out to get me. There's a contract out on me."

"A—contract?"

"Uh-huh. That wall-eyed gunman wants to make morgue meat out of me. Get the idea, limey?"

Finch's instinctive horror at this crude term was eclipsed by an even greater one. He frowned. "I'm afraid you've made a mistake. I've only been in the Limehouse District of London twice in my life, and I can assure you—"

"Don't get sore. To me all Englishmen are limeys." Coster stopped suddenly and peered across at Finch, the grin back on his face. "Say, buster, you wouldn't happen to have a gun under that classy topcoat yourself, would you?"

Finch was appalled. "A gun! Why, you're out of your mind. I've never touched a gun in my life—except, that is, a shotgun

when I was a member of a hunt club for a brief time."

Coster laughed again—boisterously. Again, Finch cringed.

"Don't get sore," Coster said. "I was only ribbing you."

"Oh, I'm not angry. But I am intrigued. These people – this syndicate of chaps you refer to. They actually intend to have you shot?"

"That's how the contract reads."

"But why? Have you offended them in some way?" Finch turned his eyes from Blue Suit and appeared to be estimating the distance between himself and the door.

"I've been a boil on the Syndicate's neck for quite a while," Coster said. "I ran several joints for them off and on." He leaned forward confidentially and Finch drew his cigarette case back hastily as though fearful that Coster would knock it off the table. He moved his martini out of harm's way also.

"Your quaint American slang fascinates me."

"I been in their hair, I meant. But they always got their money's worth because I'm a good man. I can keep a gambling joint in line—make the help stay honest—grease the right spots—you know. I'm a born operator."

"I'm sure you are, but why do they want to—to make morgue meat out of you as you so picturesquely term it? Efficiency at your chosen profession hardly seems cause for murder."

Coster leaned forward and spoke in low confidence, now. "I used to be a booze fighter."

"A booze fighter?"

"An alcoholic, kind of. You know—things go wrong and I'd hit the bottle a little."

"Oh, I see. The inebriated state rendered you incapable of functioning."

"You talk like a goon. I can drink a gallon and walk away. It's just that gin makes me friendly."

"Alcohol often does that to people. Still, I don't see why they would object to a friendly proprietor in a house of chance. Really—"

"They used to claim I talked too much." A shade of sheepishness crept into Coster's grin. He finished his drink as Blue Suit bored a hole in his back with cold impersonal eyes.

"Then it would seem that a warning—"

"Uh-huh." Coster pointed to his nose and the scars on his cheeks. "These was warnings, pally."

Finch glanced, in order, at Blue Serge and the door. Then he looked back at Coster. "My word!"

"The Syndicate plays rough. Coster raised a hand toward the waitress. "Two more for me and my limey friend."

"Oh, I say. The next one is on me. Your hospitality is overwhelming."

Coster brushed the protest aside as though it were a buzzing fly. "Yeah," he said, almost fondly, "they play rough but they always took me back because I'm a good man, see?" His smile vanished. His look turned alert and vicious. "Then the slobs put out a contract on me. Can you tie that?"

Perhaps Finch could but he wasn't going to discuss it. He seemed far more interested in another angle. "You described the contract as an order for murder. Yet you aren't at all frightened. You treat the whole matter as something of a joke."

Coster tapped his forehead and winked. "It ain't no joke, limey. It's just that I know my way around. Nobody panics me."

"I'd think you'd be in hiding."

"Like I said, I know the Syndicate. There's a lot of crap been mouthed around that things are different now than in Capone's day. Well, they ain't. The same slobs run things and you can't teach a slob much. And when they can't learn, you can outguess 'em. Why limey, that contract's been out on me for six months. And you don't see no holes in my hide, do you?"

"But isn't it rather foolhardy to—"

"The only thing they ever learned," Coster went on, ignoring the unfinished question, is that you can't drive down a street and tommy-gun a whole neighborhood. They used to do that in Chi and they got clipped for it. But the rest—it's still all the same; muscle a guy into a car out of a dark alley and drop him in the lake. No imagination. The same old muscle."

"And how," Finch asked, "do you avoid such catastrophes?"

"Simple." Coster stopped and scowled across the room. "Where's that dame with our martinis?"

"She's probably quite busy." Finch regarded Coster as though he were not quite real.

"Do you, think it wise to drink so much?"

"No problem," Coster assured him. "A few martinis only sharpen me up."

"You were saying—in the matter of avoiding danger—"

"You just don't ever let yourself get caught alone. That's all there is to it. You stay on busy streets. You live in downtown hotels. You do your drinking in crowded places like this. That moke back there knows better than to fire in a crowd. Keep people around me and I'm as safe as a baby in its crib." Coster shrugged as the waitress hove in sight with the martinis. "You stay with people and they can't do a goddam thing."

Finch toyed reflectively with his cigarette case. He opened it

but did not immediately select a cigarette. "Living week after week in the mouth of danger," he marveled. "May I say that I admire your courage."

"Ain't nobody ever accused me of weak guts," Coster said grimly.

Finch smiled. "I don't mind admitting that I'm terrified."

And Finch's eyes now reflected this terror as they turned toward the man in the blue suit. He gripped the edge of the table and half rose.

Coster turned to look. His lip twisted. He turned back to Finch and the latter sank back in his chair.

"I—I thought he was reaching for his gun," Finch said with a weak smile. "I guess you've put my nerves a little on edge."

Coster grinned easily. "You can't stop a guy from blowing his nose." He raised his glass. "Bottom's up."

Finch sipped nervously. His eyes, still dubious, were on Blue Suit, who was returning his handkerchief to its pocket. "I've really had a long day," he said. "I—"

"Think I'll turn in myself," Coster grunted.

"I'm at the Buxton down the street," Finch said. "Where are you—" He stopped, abashed. "Really, old man, I wasn't trying to pry—"

"Across the street at the Pelham. He yawned. "I guess I'll turn in too. This joint's dead tonight." He threw a ten dollar bill on the table and got to his feet. Blue Suit got up also.

Finch looked uncertainly at Coster. Coster, completely at ease, grinned. "Come on limey. Let's get out o' this fire trap." With that he turned a sneer on Blue Suit. The latter's face showed no expression as he dropped some money on his check.

But if Coster's expression was reckless, his actions were not. When he got to the door, his voice was crisp as he said, "You first, pally."

They went into the street and stood side by side at the curb. "You crossing over?" Coster asked, his tone almost a challenge.

Finch pulled his eyes away from the door they'd just used and said, "Oh, no. I'll go straight on my way. He extended his hand but when Coster made no move to take it, he said, "It was very nice meeting you, sir. Very nice. Perhaps we'll run into each other again."

"I doubt it," Coster said.

Finch took a backward step. "Well, ships that pass in the night," he said with forced gaiety, and moved swiftly away.

Coster watched him curiously. "Odd little kook," he muttered . . .

Coster, watching for suspicious-looking cars, crossed the street with a group that had

been waiting for the light to change. He entered the lobby of the Pelham and found a satisfactory amount of late evening activity. This did not surprise him, however. Activity was the main reason he'd selected the Pelham.

He went to the elevator bank and passed up two almost empty cars, taking a third one along with a group of six who were jovial, carefree, and a little tight.

There was a floor receptionist on each level of the Pelham, another factor that made the hotel desirable to Coster. He grinned at her as he passed by. She watched him put his key into the lock.

But he did not enter the room. Instead, he clutched at his stomach, the poison hitting at that moment.

He sank to his knees in agony. He looked around, as though searching for his assailant.

But of course, Mr. Finch was long gone . . .

THE HUNT FOR "WALL BREAKERS"

The **Hamburger Abendblatt** reports that a special working group whose sole purpose is to hunt "Wall Breakers" and "Desertion Helpers" has now been trained by the office of the Attorney General in East Germany. Already 132 West Berliners and citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany are said to have been listed as "wanted." Warrants for their arrest have been issued and "special groups" are investigating the charges against them.

NEXT MONTH –

AN ADVENTURE FROM THE DAYS WHEN THE SAINT'S METHODS WERE MORE PREDOMINANTLY PHYSICAL, ENTHUSIASTICALLY ABETTED BY SUCH COMPANIONS AS HOPPY UNIATZ —

THE UNLICENSED VICTUALLERS

A SAINT NOVEL by LESLIE CHARTERIS

in the November 1963 issue, THE SAINT MYSTERY MAGAZINE

five o'clock menace

by Bruno Fischer

JUST A HAIRCUT. Don't like anybody scraping my Adam's apple with a straight-edged razor. What's that? I'm scared my throat will be cut? That's not funny, son. Though I guess I don't have to worry. I'm not a slick-looking young fella that has an eye for a pretty married woman.

Well, there's a story about that. It's about a young fella that was a barber too, and about another young fella that sold brushes.

Jackville was the place. County seat, but you city fellas wouldn't call it big. The Elite Tonsorial Parlor could fit in a corner of this place, and it was the only one in maybe fifteen miles.

Never did stick to any job long, and barbering was one of the trades I picked up. I was working for Warrender that owned the grocery store and was a skin-flint and slave-driver, when I heard Earle Beal needed a man for his second chair. I walked across the street to the

---

Bruno Fischer, author of more than twenty novels and of innumerable short stories, once wrote about Ben Helm, a detective in several of his novels, how Helm was the man he'd "most want to know in real life. A decent man in a rotten trade, who never loses his overriding sense of tragedy, an intelligent and sensitive man without burlesque pretensions at culture . . ." Fischer's people, in other words, are flesh-and-blood people whom you often have a feeling you've met before. Maybe you have . . .

Originally published in the May 1949 issue of BLACK MASK.
Reprinted by permisson of the author and the author's agent, Mr. August Lenniger.

Elite Tonsorial Parlor, and a minute later Earle handed me a white coat.

This Earle Beal was a young fella about your age, son. Skinny shoulders and a big nose and a long jaw. Eyes always kind of sad, even when he was a boy. And he didn't talk much. Not for a barber.

That barbershop used to belong to his father, name of Hank Beal. When Earle got out of the army, Hank handed the place over to him. Hank and his wife went down to Florida where they could sit in the sun all day.

It was a nice business for a young fella to have, being it was the only place to get a shave and haircut between Jackville and Fort Hals. Earle Beal bought a little house on Tamara Lane and married Annie Stillman. She was a good-looking, black-eyed girl—maybe a little wild for a serious fella like him, but he sure liked her in that quiet way of his.

One afternoon I was sweeping the floor when this strange young fella came in.

Tall young fella with wide shoulders. Looked like he'd just come out of the window of a big city gents' furnishing store. Blue handkerchief sticking out of his breast pocket and manicured fingernails. Kind of handsome if you like a fella to be smooth and slick.

Nobody else was in the shop, and he got into Earle's chair, that was the first one from the door.

Never stopped talking. Before Earle could pin the sheet around his neck, he already told us his name was Grant Vickers and he came from Trevan and was selling brushes from house to house. Guess his fancy clothes helped sell brushes, and his slick looks didn't hurt any.

Earle lathered his face without saying a word and looking like he wasn't even hearing the stories. Earle knew his Annie was waiting for him to come home to her.

This Grant Vickers said he was staying overnight in Mrs. Follett's tourist house. He asked Earle did he know where a fella could have some fun in the evening.

"There's a movie over in Fort Hals," Earle said. "But it's a long drive."

Vickers turned his head and winked at me— "My, what innocence," he said.

Then he went on talking about the brush business. Wasn't anything we didn't know about brushes by the time Earle finished shaving him.

Well, when Earle came home that evening, he found a couple of brand-new brushes on the dining-room table.

One was a hair brush and one was a kitchen brush, but what kind they were doesn't matter.

They were brushes.

Earle looked down at them and scratched his chin. "I shaved that fella today," he said.

Annie came out of the kitchen where she was fixing his supper. "What did you say, dear?" she said.

"That fella you bought these brushes from was in the shop today," he said. "I shaved him."

"He's awfully handsome," Annie said.

Earle looked at her. She wore one of those little white aprons over her dress. Her arms were bare and the black hair was piled on top of her head and her black eyes had bright lights in them. Looked mighty good to Earle, Annie did—but he didn't like coming home and hearing his wife saying another young fella was handsome.

Earle stood scowling at her, not saying anything because he's a fella that doesn't talk much. Annie caught on she'd said too much and snuggled up to him.

"Of course, in my eyes you're the handsomest man there ever was," she said. "And you haven't kissed me yet."

Earle wasn't a fella who went in for a lot of kissing and mushing, even with a pretty wife of his own. He kissed her and then went to wash up for supper.

Was I there that I know just what they said? No, son, I wasn't. Earle told me all about it. Not the next day. He wasn't the talking kind. Anyway, he'd forgotten about that brush salesman. I mean, for just about two weeks he did.

Then this slick young fella, Grant Vickers, came walking into the Elite Tonsorial Parlor. Earle was giving Kelcey Sawyer a haircut, so Vickers got into my chair.

"Back to sell more brushes?" I said.

"I found this a good territory," he said. "A lot of women couldn't make up their minds at once and asked me to return in a couple of weeks."

I remembered how last time he'd told us all about what a ladies' man he was, and I'm a fella likes to make a joke.

"Made up their minds about buying brushes?" I said.

Vickers put his head back and winked up at me. "I can't say that I didn't hurry back because I met a certain cute number on my last trip," he said. "I have an idea Jackville is going to see a lot of me from now on."

Kelcey Sawyer, a young fella that likes the women, too, got interested. "She can't be the blonde widow just moved into the gray house on Pine Road?"

"Nope," Vickers said.

"How about giving me her name?" I said, lathering his face.

Just kidding, of course. I'm not a young fella and I never was so much with the ladies anyway, but a man likes to kid around

with a customer.

"Well, after all, she's married," Vickers said, grinning up at me "and gentlemen don't tell."

Earle turned from his chair looking real sore.

Vickers gave me another of his winks.

"Does his mother let him out alone?" he said.

"Don't get the idea Earle doesn't know the score," Kelcey said to Vickers. "He grabbed off the prettiest girl in town."

Earle didn't say anything. Just kept cutting Kelcey's hair and looking like he always did, kind of sad.

When Vickers left, Earle turned to watch him go out the door and up the street. "I don't like that fella," he said.

"He gave me a quarter tip for just a shave," I put in. "What more can you want from a customer?"

Earle shook his head and went back to finish combing Kelcey's hair.

Easy with the scissors on top, son. Haven't got much hair up there to begin with.

That night after supper Earle went into the living room to listen to the radio while Annie was washing the dishes. There was a long, thin package on top of the radio cabinet. He opened the package and found a long brush with a long handle.

He looked at the brush for maybe a minute and then carried it into the kitchen.

"What's this?" he said.

Annie was standing at the sink. She turned her head to see what he had in his hand.

"That's a special brush for cleaning venetian blinds," she said.

"So he was here again today?" Earle said.

"Who?" she said.

"The brush salesman you think is so handsome," he said.

Annie stood drying her hands on the kitchen towel and looking at him kind of puzzled. "Dear, you're not jealous of a brush salesman?" she said.

All of a sudden he felt pretty foolish. "It's only that you're spending a lot of money on brushes," he said.

"Well, I need them," she said and picked up a dish to dry.

Earle put the brush down on the kitchen table and went back to the living room to listen to the radio.

Next morning in the shop, it was, that Earle Beal told me about it. He said he didn't know much about women and things like that, and what did I think about it?

"Look," I said. "These companies make and sell brushes because women need them in the house. Annie needed them and bought them. So what?"

Earle didn't say anything. He went into the back room for

towels and put a stack in his cabinet and a stack in mine. Then, without looking at me, he started talking like he was talking to himself.

"Annie's home alone all day," he said. "Evenings, I don't take her out often. I like to sit around in the house, even Sundays."

"Earle, don't be a sap," I said.

"She likes a good time," he said. "Before she married me, she was always going to parties and dancing. I'm a pretty dull husband, I guess."

"If it comes to that," I said, "I guess all husbands are pretty dull." Soon as the words were out of my mouth, I knew they were the wrong ones to say.

Earle, he just turned away from me and went into the back room.

A customer came in and then some more, and I didn't have a chance to be alone with Earle till nearly lunch time.

"You're a lucky fella," I said. "You got a nice business and your own home and a beautiful wife. Why you trying to spoil it with foolish ideas?"

He kind of smiled. For Earle, it was like when another fella grinned.

"I ought to be kicked, George," he said.

Don't know if Earle forgot about this Grant Vickers, but I did. Anyway, for about ten days . . .

It was early afternoon, around half-past one, when there was hardly any business. One of these bright, sunny days. Earle, he stood looking out of the shop window. All of a sudden his body gave a jerk.

"He's back," he said.

I raised my head from a picture magazine and asked who was back.

"That brush salesman," Earle said.

"Business must be good for him in Jackville," I said. "Last time he was here was no more than ten days ago."

I was always saying the wrong thing about that fella. I mean things that could be taken with two different meanings.

Earle's eyes got sadder than I'd ever seen them.

"He can't sell that many brushes in town," he said. "He was heading toward Tamara Lane."

"So what?" I said. "Half the United States is in that direction."

Earle looked like he was thinking over what I said, but I was pretty sure he hadn't heard a word.

After a minute he took off his white coat and put on his jacket and hat. Said he'd be back soon. Got in his car and drove off.

I was a little nervous, or maybe just curious. I stood at the window waiting for him to come back and hoping he wouldn't do

anything he'd be sorry for. Then Abe Gorkin came in for a haircut, and I was kind of glad I had something to do with my hands and somebody to talk to about the weather.

Wasn't many minutes later that Earle came back.

"Hello, Earle," Abe Gorkin said.

You ever see a face that's empty, son? Like a dead face, but it's still alive. That was the face Earle looked at Abe with. Didn't say hello. Just walked into the back room.

You can g u e s s how bad I wanted to know what happened.

"Excuse me a minute," I said to Abe, and went into the back room.

Earle was taking off his jack - He didn't look at me.

"So there wasn't anything to it," I said. "That's why you're back so quick."

"His car was parked in front of my house," Earl said, so quiet I could hardly hear him.

"Why not?" I said. "Annie keeps buying brushes from him and the more he sells, the more commission he makes."

Earle was putting on his white coat.

"No," he said. "He headed straight there, a mile and a half, without stopping anywhere else on the way."

"Did you go in?" I asked.

"No." he said. He turned and went into the shop.

"That's what I thought too, son — that he was scared to go into his house. Scared that Grant Vickers, that had such wide shoulders, would beat his ears off. Or maybe scared to actually see what there was to see, so there wouldn't be anything to do but kick Annie out of his house.

Anyway, that's what I thought. But you can't tell about those quiet, deep fellas. He had it all figured out. When he saw that car in front of his house, he came back to the shop because he figured Grant Vickers would drop in for a shave like he had the other two times.

And sure enough, I'd finished cutting Abe Gorkin's hair and was tilting back the chair to shave him when that slick young fella came in.

"Hello," he said.

Earle, he hardly looked at him. I just nodded.

Vickers hung his hat on a hook and untied his necktie and sat in Earle's chair. "The works," he said. "Haircut, shave, anything else you can sell me to make the women swoon over me."

My hand was shaking as I rubbed lather into Abe Gorkin's face. I went around to the other side of my chair so I could look at Earle's chair.

You being a barber, son, you know when you give a man a haircut and shave you cut his hair first. But this time Earle

didn't. He was going to shave him first.

Nobody said a thing for a while. Not even Vickers, though I never before knew him to keep his mouth shut for ten seconds. He was looking up at the ceiling and kind of smiling to himself while Earle rubbed lather into his face.

"You nicked me, George," Abe said. I'd caught him on the edge of the chin. Fact is, I didn't even know I'd started to shave him.

Earle was stropping a razor.

I looked at Grant Vickers lying there with his head all the way back. I looked at his neck covered with lather. Earle kept stropping the razor like he couldn't get it sharp enough.

What could I do? Grab Earle and yell to Vickers to run for his life. Guess I'm no hero. I didn't want any part of a man that had a straight-edged razor in his hand and that look in his eyes.

All of a sudden I got an idea.

"Say, Abe," I said. "How's Sam Ware getting on with that pretty black-eyed wife of his?"

Abe Gorkin kind of frowned up at me. "What do you mean, how's he getting on with her?" he said.

"Well," I said, "those black eyes of hers always have a friendly look for the young fellas."

"Don't you get any wrong idea about Mary Ware," Abe said. "She's a respectable girl."

Earle had started shaving Vickers. His back was to me, sort of hunched over the chair. In the mirror I saw his face. Kind of stiff, like he was holding it together. I had an idea that he was listening to what I was saying to Abe Gorkin. I hoped to heaven he was.

"Me, I'm partial to dark girls," I said to Abe. "Take that Amelia Rogers over on Mill Street. She's more my age, but still good-looking. Likes the young fellas too."

"I know Amelia," Abe Gorkin said. He was the mailman and so knew everybody. "I wouldn't want that husband of hers after me."

Earle had finished one side of Vickers' face, and now he was stropping the razor again. Couldn't seem to get it sharp enough to please him.

"Talking about dark-eyed girls, Abe," I said, "that's a pretty little woman Bert Hopkins married in Cleveland and brought back to Jackville. Know anything about her?"

"Just that she's real cute," Abe Gorkin said.

"Lots of pretty women with dark eyes and hair live in Jackville," I said. "Most of them married too. Doesn't leave any for a fella who's partial to brunettes."

"For my money," Abe Gorkin said, Earle grabbed off the prettiest brunette in town. What do you think, Earle?"

Earle grunted.

Any sound coming from him was a good sign. I looked in the mirror and saw that he was shaving Vickers' throat.

"Town's full of married brunettes," I said. "Guess if I was married to one I'd be kind of nervous about her being alone home all day while I was away at work."

"Why limit it to brunettes?" Abe Gorkin said.

Grant Vickers didn't say anything. Wasn't easy to believe that a couple of fellas could talk about women without him chipping in to tell what a ladies' man he was. Guess he wasn't in a talking mood that day.

"You should know about all kinds of women, Abe," I said. "You being a mailman and going from house to house when the husbands aren't home and the kids in school."

"Kidding around about women is all right," Abe Gorkin said. "There's lots of stories and jokes about mailmen and bill collectors and salesmen. But let me tell you something. I've been a mailman for nine years, and I can say that we have a respectable bunch of women around here."

Grant Vickers turned his head and smiled at Abe Gorkin, like he was saying, *Oh, yeah? I know different.*

"I agree, Abe," I said. "I'm sick and tired of husbands always thinking their wives are cheating on them when they ought to be thanking heaven every night they got such a sweet, devoted woman."

"Those are the truest words I ever heard," Earle said.

The wild look wasn't in his eyes anymore. His face had stopped being stiff.

Funny how it gets you after you know you've won. When I went for a hot towel for Abe Gorkin's face, my knees were shaking.

Earle was kind of smiling to himself as he finished shaving Grant Vickers. He didn't strop his razor again.

More customers came in. Wasn't till late in the afternoon that Earle had a chance to speak to me in private.

"You brought me to my senses, George," he said. "You know what I had in mind?"

"I know," I said.

"You showed me that Annie isn't the only pretty married brunette in town," he said. "I've no more reason to suspect my wife than anybody else's wife. He was likely lying anyway, about any woman."

"I'm glad you saw it," I said.

"It's plain now why he drove straight to my house," he said. "Annie must've ordered a special kind of brush he didn't have in his car, and when he passed through town today he dropped it off. I'll find still another brush

when I get home tonight."

"That's a fine wife you've got there."

"Don't I know it," he said.

Well, son, when Earle Beale got home that evening, he didn't find another brush. He didn't find Annie. All he found was a note.

Annie wrote that she couldn't stand the kind of life she was leading, or him either. Wrote she was going away with a man that she really loved.

Next morning I got to the shop nine o'clock on the dot, like always, and Earle was standing by his chair.

"What's the matter now?" I said, hanging up my hat.

He told me about the note from Annie. "Two years married," he said, speaking down to the razor he was stropping. "She liked me all right. She liked me enough to marry me when she could've had almost any single fella in town."

"You should've taken her out more," I said. "Kissed her more. Talked to her more. Guess she was pretty lonely even when you were home with her. That's why she went off."

Earle, he looked at me. "You shouldn't have talked me out of keeping him from going off with Annie," he said.

"You didn't know when you were shaving him he was going off with Annie," I said.

He kept running one razor back and forth over the strop. Back and forth, so very slow. And there was that same look in his eyes as yesterday.

I kind of moved nearer the door. "Wait a minute," I said. "How do you know it was this Grant Vickers she went off with?"

"Mrs. Meers that lives across the street once bought brushes from him," Earle said. "She saw him carry bags out of the house. Annie was with him, and they drove off together."

Earle tested the edge of the razor with his thumb and then stropped it some more.

"He didn't know I was Annie's husband," he said. "The only name on the window is the Elite Tonsorial Parlor. I guess she didn't talk about her husband. Didn't tell him I ran the town barber shop. Yesterday she must've been packing her bags when he came in here to get himself prettied up."

"That's why he didn't do any talking in the chair yesterday," I said. "He was thinking about going away with Annie."

Earle looked at me.

"He could get up off this chair," he said very slow and quiet, "because you talked me into letting him go. And he went straight from here to take my wife away from me."

He stopped stropping the razor.

"Listen, Earle," I said.

He started to walk over to me. Not hurrying. The open razor held down along the side of his leg.

I got out of there.

Didn't take time to get my hat. Never went back for it.

No, I didn't leave Jackville because I was scared of Earle Beal. Just figured there was a better chance for a fella to make a living in a big city like this.

Only thing, I don't like anybody scraping my neck with a straight - edged razor. Wait a minute, son. You hold up the mirror to the back of my head. Want to see what kind of job you did.

AN EDITORIAL ASIDE

What, actually, is "realism"?

A reader of this magazine had an interesting reaction to the Scott Fitzgerald story in our July 1963 issue. He "was shocked to read that stupid story 'The Dance'."

> "The slob that wrote it did not have brains enough to know that the strength of this country has been the farms, small towns and small cities, while the larger cities have been the cesspools and are getting worse due to the n --- s moving north. It was just an ordinary murder story that could have happened anywhere and why drag in his views about small cities, so why did you publish it."

Why did we publish it?

'The Dance,' in this writer's considered opinion, is a distinguished story.

I have an idea that the author would have agreed that the strength of his country has been the farms, the small towns, and the small cities. This though Francis Scott Fitzgerald was to become, in his lifetime, the living symbol of what his contemporaries considered to be "the angry young writers" of that generation. Fitzgerald captured the spirit of the Twenties in novels such as THE GREAT GATSBY (1925) and in this story this very urban-minded man, I feel, captured something of the spirit of the South of his generation and social group—the same South that Faulkner was writing about in New Orleans, with equally clearеyed objectivity.

By the same token there are no doubt some, who do not remember or do not choose to remember some aspects of life in the Prohibition years, who will have mixed feelings about the Cornell Woolrich story in this issue.

There is no denying that this is not a gentle story, but then Death, as it would come to these men, would seldom be gentle—or subdued. The world of Abbazzia, back there in the Twenties, and of the gangster who was executed in his flower-shop the other day, is a very real world, with its own rules and its own mores. This, as I have said, is not a gentle story. But it is, in my opinion, a superb study of a world next door to the world in which we ourselves live out our days and years. This world of Abbazzia and of his mother—and of his executioners—is a part of our times and, in a sense of our own making. This story also, ugly and brutal and elemental though it may seem, is, like the Fitzgerald story, part of our memories as a people.

H.S.S.

the man who chose the devil

by Richard Deming

WHEN I thought about it afterwards, it seemed the fat man must have been puzzled that I paid no attention to his standing on my foot. But I was actually unaware of it until I tried to slide off the bar stool and found one foot pinned to the floor.

Of course he didn't realize there was no feeling in my right limb, that instead of flesh it was an intricate contrivance of cork and aluminum strapped to a stump below my knee. The Government paid me $180.00 a month for not having a right leg. They were also going to buy me a brand new car—when they got around to it.

Just before I tried to leave my stool, I caught a glimpse of Anton Strowlski in the bar mirror. The dapper gunman approached with one hand negligently carried in the pocket of his tailored suit-coat. Since I had never rubbed against Anton, I knew he wasn't looking for me, but I automatically g r o w observant when gunmen, even friendly

---

Richard Deming, author of BODY FOR SALE (Pocket Books) and numerous other novels, will be remembered by readers of this magazine for his superb study of a new way of murder, in DEATH AT MIDNIGHT (SMM, July 1963), A MEDAL FOR DON CARLOS (SMM, July 1962), and for his other Manny Moon stories, such as BLOOD OATH (SMM, March 1962).

Orgiinally published in the May 1948 issue of BLACK MASK
Copyright 1948 by Fictoncers, Inc.
Reprinted by permission of the author and the author's agents,
Scott Meredith Literary Agency, Inc.

gunmen, get behind me with their hands in their pockets.

Anton's expression was casual, his eyes on no one in particular. But something in the face of the fat man standing next to me, as it was reflected in the bar mirror, caused me to shift my glance from the gunman to him. The fat man's face was expressionless, but his eyes unwinkingly followed the image of Anton Strowlski.

It was then I decided to move from my stool. Not that I expected anything to happen in as public a place as the Jefferson Lounge, but some inbred caution prompted me to want a large section of the Jefferson's air - conditioned atmosphere wedged between myself and the fat man. And I found myself stuck to the floor.

The fat man stood half-faced away from me, his left elbow propped on the bar and his left foot solidly crushing the full weight of his two hundred and forty pounds on my right shoe. With one eye still on Anton, I tapped his arm.

The gesture caught Anton's attention and he flashed me a quick glance, nodded in recognition and made an abrupt right wheel towards the far end of the bar.

Without moving his body, the fat man turned at me a florid face which would have meant a fortune to a burlesque comedian. High-domed, round-cheeked and pug-nosed, and with bright, heavily lidded eyes over which satanic eyebrows arched upwards at the ends, instead of down, it was the face of a rollicking satyr.

I pointed at the floor. "If you don't mind, I'll take my foot with me."

His lips drew back over dazzling mail order teeth, and a chuckle worked its way up from his gargantuan paunch, coming out baritone and amused. Without moving his foot, he turned his back.

I began to get sore, but not enough to slug him. The Jefferson Lounge frowns on commotion. It even frowns if you drop your money on the bar instead of laying it down noiselessly. It features organ music and quietness, apparently ashamed of being a saloon and trying to disguise the truth under a church-like atmosphere. I tapped my fat drinking mate again.

"Your foot is on mine," I explained clearly.

"I know." He turned his back again.

"Move it," I said to his back, without raising my voice.

His big head swivelled at me for the third time. Satanic brows quirked upwards and his ready made incisors sparkled again.

"You move it."

His bright eyes glinted mis-

chievously, completely lacking the contentiousness of a stew picking a fight. I saw he was dead sober, yet for some reason, which I vaguely linked with the presence of Anton Strowlski, was deliberately trying to start a scene. So I gave him one.

Sliding my stool to the left, I let the side of my chest drop across it, grasping the seat with both hands for support. Rapidly crossing my left leg over my right until the sole of my foot rested against the inside of his far knee, I pushed.

His right leg buckled, throwing him off balance, and he grabbed at the bar with both hands. At the same time he involuntarily moved the foot imprisoning mine a step backward. Snapping erect, I smashed the heel of my released right foot into the underside of his left knee. He sat down with a crash that shook the room and stopped the organist in the middle of a bar.

With surprising agility for a fat man, he bounced to his feet and swung a roundhouse at my head. In a brawl, I watch a man's eyes. His showed no anger, only an increased mischievous joy. My knees bent and his fist whistled a foot over my hair.

He was easy. One short jab in that soft stomach jack-knifed him forward with his jaw conveniently out-thrust. When he hit the floor this time, he stayed there and slept.

I looked up from his sprawled body just in time to see Anton Strowlski let the street door swing closed behind him.

You simply do not brawl in the Jefferson Lounge. Fatso was hardly asleep before a cop had me by either arm. I think the management keeps cops under the bar, along with ice-cubes and lemons.

When they finally got Fatso awake, they put us both in a prowl car. The Jefferson's manager stood at the curb wringing his hands and looking horrified.

"No charges, officer," he kept saying. "Just take them away."

The older of the two cops said testily: "All right. All right," and the manager moved away.

The Jefferson Lounge is situated in one corner of the elaborate Jefferson H o t e l. As the Lounge manager passed back into his dispensary, I noticed Anton Strowlski a few yards up the street under the hotel marquee. With his back against the brick wall near the main entrance, he watched us broodingly. I recognized our driver, a stocky, middle-aged cop, without being able to recall his name. I know most men on the force, at least by sight. The other cop was young and unfamiliar, p r o b a b l y a rookie.

The driver twisted in his seat to look us over. Fatso was shaking his head and working his

jaw back and forth with one hand.

"You're Manny Moon, aren't you?" the driver said to me.

"Yeah."

"Who are you?" he asked my sparring partner.

"Willard Longstreet." The fat man turned to me. "Manville Moon, are you? The private dick?

I nodded shortly.

"What you hit me with?"

"With great enjoyment, you big ape."

He grinned his satyr grin and mischievous brightness returned to his eyes. He fixed them on the driver.

"What are your plans, cop?"

The policeman frowned. "They were to let you go, if you promise to behave. But I don't like 'cop.'"

"I want Moon booked for assault and battery," Longstreet said calmly. "Drive along."

"Why you . . .!" I started to say, then stopped and relaxed. "Go along," I told the driver.

Shrugging, the cop faced forward and started the motor. I glanced over at Anton once more, saw him frown at us worriedly, and on a spur of the moment impulse decided to make the party complete.

"Hold it!" I told the driver.

Gears clashed as the driver, starting to release the clutch, suddenly braked and slipped back into neutral. Locking the emergency, he peered at me in the rear-view mirror.

"Now what?"

I said: "The guy standing under the hotel marquee is Anton Strowlski. Know him?"

Both cops glanced that way and both shook their heads.

"Chicago boy. Even money you'll find a gun if you shake him down."

Anton, noting our eyes on him, began to move away slowly. Swinging open his door, the younger cop bounced from the car.

"You!" he called.

Pretending not to hear, Anton increased his pace. The cop legged after him, drawing his service revolver as he ran.

"Halt, or I'll shoot!"

The command improved Anton's hearing and he stopped dead in his tracks and turned. The cop gestured towards the building with his gun and Anton, familiar with the routine through much previous experience, faced the wall with his hands elevated about to shoulder height.

Deftly running his free hand over the gunman's body, the policeman relieved him of a dainty, snub-nosed automatic. He found it in the same pocket Anton's hand had occupied when I first glimpsed him in the mirror.

Reholstering his revolver, the cop let Anton precede him back to the car. Without a word the gunman took his place in the

rear seat between Longstreet and me.

As we made our second start I said: "Who you working for these days, Strowlski?"

Eyes brittle as broken glass swung to my face. He ignored my question. "You finger me, Moon?"

"Mr. Moon," I said.

His lips quirked upward, lacking mirth. "I've heard that gag about you. I don't mister nobody."

Without moving my body or changing expression, I drove my right elbow into his chin. His smirk was absorbed by a vacuous look and he slumped heavily against the shoulder of Longstreet, who flashed me a startled glance and pushed the gunman away. Anton's head slumped forward, hiding his vacant expression, and his body wedged between us, remained erect.

Neither of the cops suspected anything wrong. Traffic sounds had drowned the slap of my elbow against Anton's jaw, and the younger cop, periodically turning to look us over, apparently assumed the gunman's bowed head the result of bashfulness.

Anton was still resting when we arrived at the station. I got out one side of the car, Longstreet got out the other and Anton rolled slowly forward on his face.

Before either cop could open his mouth I said: "What's the matter with him?" threw a suspicious look at Longstreet and asked, "You do something to him in the car?"

Longstreet's outraged expression faded into one of amusement. "He was all right a minute ago."

"Looks like he fainted," said the younger cop.

The middle-aged cop glanced at Longstreet suspiciously, then said to his colleague: "Well, drag him out and slap him awake."

Without waiting to see his instructions carried out, he waved us ahead of him and followed us up the steps grunting audibly.

Sergeant Danny Blake was working the desk at headquarters. When he saw me, he flashed his gold front tooth and asked hopefully: "What's the charge? Homicide?"

"Assault and battery," said our chauffeur. He pointed his thumb first at Longstreet and then at me. "On him, by him."

"The old man will be disappointed," Blake said, enjoying himself. "Only assault and battery."

I said: "Fill out your forms, clown, or it will be homicide. Only someone else will have to enter the charge."

Throwing open his log book, Blake entered my name and other identifying information, put down Longstreet as complainant, then, pen poised, looked inquir-

ingly up at the arresting officer.

"Jefferson Lounge," the policeman said. "About a half hour ago." He glanced up at the clock on the wall. "That'd make it 2:30 p.m. It was about 50-50, according to the manager. They both swung, only Moon connected."

Blake looked at me. "You filing counter-charges?"

Ever since we left the Jefferson, I had been thinking that over. I turned toward Longstreet and caught the same michievous laughter deep in his eyes. I didn't understand him. I didn't understand anything, except that up till now I seemed to be reacting exactly as he wanted. I decided to change that.

"No counter-charge," I said, and the lights went out of Longstreet's eyes as though someone had thrown a switch.

He watched me thoughtfully as I posted $250.00 bond, which left my checking account at five figures: a one, a two, a six, a decimal point and two zeros.

"It'll help my civil suit if you're convicted in police court," he remarked pleasantly. "I'm going to sue you, of course."

"Do that." I took my receipt and turned to leave.

"Wait a minute," Longstreet called.

I looked back at him, waiting.

"I withdraw all charges," he said to Blake.

Sergeant Blake's face reddened and he rose to his feet. "Lissen . . ." he started to say, but that was as far as he got.

"Don't raise your voice at me!" Longstreet interrupted. And, leaning across the rail, he planted his fist squarely in the sergeant's nose.

Two things happened rapidly. Sergeant Blake sat on the floor, and the cop who brought us in twisted Longstreet's arm up behind his back until the fat man stood on his toes.

"Lock him up!" Blake roared, using his desk to pull himself erect. Blood trickled across his mouth from each nostril.

Still cramping Longstreet's arm behind his back, our cop dogtrotted him towards the corridor leading to the pokey. As they passed through the door, the fat man twisted his head over his shoulder to grin at me. The familiar mischievous laughter was back in his eyes.

"He had a devil of a time getting arrested," I said to Blake.

But the sergeant was too busy holding a handkerchief to his nose to care what I said or did. I picked my cheque off his desk, dropped the receipt and left.

As I went down the steps, Anton Strowlski, partially supported by the rookie cop, groggily stumbled up. The look he threw me tried to be venomous, but it came out more punchy than baneful.

I returned it with a grin.

The phone blared me out of a sound sleep at four in the morning. I let it ring while I strapped on my leg and slipped into a robe, being in no rush to end the wait of anyone who phoned at that hour.

"Moon," I said, when I finally got to the phone.

"About time," a familiar voice rapped in my ear.

It was Inspector Warren Day, Chief of Homicide, who for years had been trying to decide whether he hated my guts or loved me like a brother.

"Go to bed," I said.

"Get your clothes on. Hannegan is on his way over to pick you up."

"Yeah? What's the charge?"

No charge. Want to see you."

I was silent for a minute. Then I said: "You've seen me lots of times. Go home and sober up."

Day's voice sank to its normal growl. "Listen, Moon. I'm in no mood for your sass. You come with Hannegan, or I'll send him back with a warrant. You're a material witness in a murder."

"Nuts. I haven't seen a murder since the last time I unravelled one you'd fouled up."

"Get your clothes on," Day repeated, and hung up.

I brushed my teeth, felt the rubble on my cheeks and wondered if a shave would bring me awake. Deciding against it, I jolted myself alive with a shot of rye instead. I was dressed when Lieutenant Hannegan arrived.

His expression was wary when he came in, a result of past experience with my resistance to Inspector Day's arbitrary orders.

"You ready?" he asked uneasily.

"All set."

He looked relieved and a little surprised. I followed him outside to the squad car, and asked no questions until he got it in motion.

Then I asked: "What's the deal?"

"Corpse named Carmichael. And the guy who did it, couldn't have."

"Come again?"

"The guy who did it was in jail when it happened. That's where you come in. Fellow named Longstreet."

"Oh," I said softly. "A faint light glimmers."

Inspector Warren Day paced back and forth in his office, chewing his eternal dead cigar and periodically ducking his skinny bald head to peer at one or another of us over his glasses.

Willard Longstreet sat on a straight-backed chair in the center of the room, his fat seat protruding beyond both edges. His clothes hung in perspiration-soaked wrinkles and his round face sagged with fatigue from hours of answering questions.

But a faint mocking light still glimmered in the back of his eyes.

Hannegan sat alongside Day's desk, and I relaxed in a chair tilted against the wall.

"You can't get away with it," Day snarled at Longstreet for the twenty-seventh time. "At 3:30 p.m. you had a phone argument with Carmichael. Your joint secretary recognized your voice. At 5 p.m. you phoned again and told Carmichael you'd be there in ten minutes. Your secretary swears it was your voice. When she left for home, Carmichael was in his office waiting for you. At 5:30 a shot was heard and the medics confirm that as the time of death. Your gun was found on the office floor too far away for it to be suicide. Your prints, and nobody else's, are on it. You got plenty of motive. You did it. How?"

"Anyone could have stolen my gun," Longstreet said patiently, also for the twenty-seventh time. "I live in a hotel and pass keys are easy to get. Besides, I was in a locked cell from 3 p.m. on."

"Locked cell! Locked cell!" Day screeched. "Shut up about locked cells! You got out and back in some way." He turned to Hannegan. "Get him out of my sight! Chain him to the wall. And post a guard in sight of him, so he doesn't get out and murder the whole police department. He's got Houdini beat!"

Hannegan got to his feet and motioned the prisoner erect. Longstreet rose slowly, his shoulders drooping with tiredness.

"Would you like to earn ten thousand dollars, Moon?" he asked me casually.

"Mr. Moon," I said.

"Mr. Moon, then," he said agreeably. "Would you like to earn ten thousand?"

"Depends on the method."

A mischievous twinkle pushed past the fatigue in his eyes. "Break this case. I don't think the cops can."

I looked him over thoughtfully. "If I prove you did it, where do I collect? From your estate?"

He shook his head. "I didn't do it."

I said: "I'll drop down to your cell later on."

When Hannegan and Longstreet were gone, Warren Day threw himself into his desk chair, traded his cigar butt for one just like it in his ash tray, carefully dusted it off and stuck it in his mouth.

"What do you think, Manny?" he asked dispiritedly.

"I think four in the morning is a hell of a time to wake me up when the murder was discovered ten hours earlier."

"How'd I know you'd been brought in with Longstreet? A different man was on the desk

at six, and I didn't hear about you till just before I called." He ran a hand over the place his hair had been. "What you think about all this?"

I said: "You're sitting on dynamite."

"I know I am."

"Wait till the papers learn you've charged a guy with committing a murder that happened while he was locked in one of your escape-proof cells."

"He's not charged with murder. We're holding him for assaulting a cop."

"What's bond?"

"Five hundred."

"Five hundred!" I said. "Longstreet only cost me two-fifty. Cops aren't worth twice as much as people."

Day wiggled his thin nose and studied his cigar. "He hasn't inquired about bond. Seems in no hurry to get out."

"But he can, whenever he wants. Then what do you do? Charge him with murder?"

The inspector rubbed the side of his nose. "I'd get laughed out of town. Jeepers creepers, Manny, you got any ideas at all about this?"

I felt sorry for him. Normally he would cut off his head before he would ask my opinion about the weather. But he was stopped so cold by this that he hadn't even cursed me once. And it was the first time in our eight-year acquaintance that we had met without trading profanity and a few mild threats.

I said: "Only what I told you. I'm as sure as I sit here that Longstreet deliberately got himself arrested. That was his sole purpose in picking a scrap at the Jefferson. And when he couldn't needle me into filing countercharges, he slugged Blake. You have to conclude he was building an alibi. Why else would he try to get in jail?"

"No reason else," he agreed reluctantly. He looked at his watch. "Six forty-five. Nearly ten hours I questioned that guy."

"Learn anything at all?"

He shook his head. "Only that he's got a motive. The best there is. Money."

Re-swapping his cigar butt for the one he had originally, he struck a match, then shook it out without lighting up and dropped the dead stick on the floor. "Ninety per cent of the stock in Rex Amusement Corporation was owned by three guys. Willard Longstreet, George Carmichael and Marden Swope. Ostensibly Swope is president, but actually they were equal partners. They had some kind of a business contract leaving their stock to the surviving partners. So Longstreet inherits half Carmichael's interest in the business. On top of that Carmichael carried a fifty-thousand-dollar insurance policy with

Willard Longstreet as beneficiary."

"How much of a business is it?"

"Tremendous, according to Longstreet. They handle coin machines, juke boxes, cigarette vendors, pinball games and one-armed bandits."

I raised my eyebrows. "One-armed bandits, eh? Illegal, aren't they?"

"Not for private clubs. There's a hundred and fifty private clubs in town, according to Longstreet. About a hundred own their own machines, and Rex Amusement Corporation supplies the others for forty per cent of the take. The clubs average about twelve machines and take in about fifteen hundred a month each. I did some arithmetic and the company's share comes out to over a quarter million dollars a year. On top of that they service the machines owned by clubs for fifty dollars a month per club. Just that part brings in sixty thousand dollars a year, and two men can handle the servicing. And all this is only one phase of the business."

He stopped and stared bitterly at his dead cigar, probably thinking about an inspector's salary. "No wonder Longstreet can say ten thousand dollars like you or I would say ten cents."

I rose ."You through with me?"

"Yeah. Go on home to bed."

At the corridor fountain I mouthed a swig of water to clear the fuzz from my tongue before going back to Longstreet's cell. There, in the centre of the hall, I found a uniformed cop seated on a chair facing the cell door.

The sun had risen, and light streaming through a small, barred window set high in the wall showed me Longstreet stretched flat on a drop-down bunk, his right wrist and right ankle cuffed to the wall as Warren Day had ordered.

"Allowed to go in there?" I asked the cop.

"Sorry," he said. "Lieutenant Hannegan's orders."

"Can I talk to him?"

The cop scratched his head. "The lieutenant didn't say anything about talking through the bars."

Longstreet turned his head in my direction. "That you, Moon?"

"Mr. Moon."

"O.K. . . . Mr. Moon. Why the formality?"

"I like to keep murderers in their place."

His tufted eyebrows raised. "That doesn't include me."

"We'll still keep it 'Mr.' I'll apologize if you turn out innocent."

He pursed his lips in an expression of grudging acceptance. "Taking my proposition, Mr. Moon?"

"Maybe. What is it?"

"Simple enough. Solve Car-

michael's murder within twenty-four hours and I'll pay ten thousand dollars."

"Why twenty-four hours?"

"I want it solved before I leave here."

I considered this answer from all sides without growing any wiser. My prospective client was a man hard to understand and, I suspected, not anxious to be understood.

"Why don't you leave now?" I asked. "All you have to do is post bond."

Gazing up at me blandly, he handed me one of the screwiest answers I have ever gotten from a client. "Want to catch up on my sleep."

For a moment I watched him speculatively, forming new questions in my mind. But having a hunch that even a thousand well-phrased questions would get nothing more from him about why he stayed in jail, I changed tack.

I said: "Suppose I take the case and you turn out to be the murderer?"

"Would I hire you if I were?" he asked. "I could get out of here in ten minutes by posting bond. And with my alibi I could bust Warren Day right out of a job if he booked me for murder. He knows it, too."

I thought this over and saw the logic of it. "All right. I'll go along. But I can't work in the dark. I want better answers than you gave the inspector."

He glanced at the guard. "Not with a cop listening in."

I turned to the cop, who was silently taking down everything we said in shorthand.

"Oh, a spy!" I said. "Run down the hall where you can watch without hearing. I want a confidential talk with my client."

His head moved back and forth sidewise. "The lieutenant said keep my eyes on him."

"Gonna make me get a lawyer?"

"Yep."

"I'll be back in a minute,' I told Longstreet.

Warren Day was still in his office, morosely puffing on an actually lighted cigar.

"Thought you went home," he said.

"Been talking to Longstreet. He's willing to tell me things if you move the big-eared cop from in front of his cell."

"Yeah?" His eyes narrowed. "You take his ten-thousand-dollar proposition?"

"Depends on what he has to say," I evaded.

"If I move the guard, will you tell me what he spills?"

I shrugged. "That's up to him. He has the right of confidence as my client, if I listen to him."

Day shook his head. "No sale. Go home and go to bed."

I took out my cheque book.

"You said five hundred, didn't you?"

The inspector's nose, which was the barometer of his blood pressure, whitened at the tip, indicating that he was irked. When the whole organ paled, it meant he was boiling.

"You post bond," he said, "and I'll charge him with murder!"

Spreading the cheque book on his desk, I reached for his desk pen. He slapped aside my hand.

"Put it up, damn you! I'll give you five minutes."

He slammed back his chair and made for the door. By the time we reached Longstreet's cell, the inspector's nose was dead white.

"You!" Day growled at the guard. "Post yourself at the end of the hall and keep your eye on this excuse for a private detective. He gets five minutes. If he passes anything through the bars, shoot him and I'll make you a sergeant."

He wheeled and marched back to his den.

"You certainly get your way around here," Longstreet said admiringly. "How'd you swing that?"

"Stow the blarney," I said. "We've got five minutes. Spill it fast."

With his free hand he fumbled at his shirt front and drew out a locket on a chain.

"See this?"

I nodded.

"A girl gave me this when I was seventeen. Twenty-seven years ago. It's the only thing in the world I got any sentiment about."

"Your wife?"

"I'm a bachelor." He paused to peer down at the locket as it lay on his chest. "This locket got me a local reputation. Ask my partners . . . or the one who's left, Marden Swope. Ask our secretary, Marie Kincaid. Ask anybody knows me well. They'll all tell you when I swear on this locket, it's God's own truth. I'd cut off my nose before I'd tell a lie on this locket."

"All right," I said. "Get to the point."

He put his hand over the locket. "On the memory of her who gave it to me, I swear I didn't kill Carmichael."

"I'm deeply impressed," I said. "We have three minutes left."

"Ask anything you want." He pushed the locket back in his shirt.

"Leave it out," I suggested.

His brows went up. "You'll get the truth. I don't necessarily lie when I'm not holding the locket."

I glanced at my watch. "Why was Anton Strowlski after you?"

"Anton who?"

"The rod man brought in with us," I said impatiently. "The only reason you started that brawl was because you saw An-

ton in the mirror and wanted cops on the scene fast."

He shook his head. "Never saw him before."

I looked through the bars at him in vexation, and he gazed back at me blandly. "Why'd you deliberately get yourself thrown in jail?" I asked finally.

He blew out his lips, there was a sound of released suction, and he used a thumb to push his plate back in place. "What makes you think I did that?"

Apparently my bothering to have the cop moved to the end of the hall had been wasted effort. I said: "If you won't answer questions, I can't help much."

He raised tufted eyebrows. "Believe me, if I could tell you a single thing about Carmichael's murder, I would. But I can't. If the answer was in me, would I pay you to dig it out?"

From the corner of my eye I saw the guard start towards us. Longstereet looked up at me without a sign of mischievousness in his suddenly serious face.

"Believe me, Mr. Moon, my being in jail has nothing to do with Carmichael's murder. You still with me?"

"Time's up," the guard broke in behind me.

I said: "I'll play along for a while," and left him to catch up on his sleep.

When I reached the front desk, Sergeant Danny Blake was just coming on duty. His nose looked like a blue turnip.

"How's the nose?" I asked.

He grunted something unintelligible.

I said: "What happened to the guy brought in with us? Anton Strowlski."

Danny thumbed through his log book. "Released on bond at seven-thirty. I was off then. Go off at five."

The night before I had gotten to bed at one in the morning and been routed out at four. I felt like falling in bed for a week, but clues have a habit of disappearing unless you follow a murder trail while it is still hot. From the desk sergeant's directory I learned the Rex Amusement Corporation was in the Bland Building, and took a cab there.

The corporation was on the first floor. It had its own entrance, separate from that to the offices on higher floors. The entrance was centred in a long loading ramp for trucks, presumably used for loading and unloading various types of coin machines. An empty, driverless truck was backed against one end of the ramp.

I found the door unlocked and walked into a huge storage room filled with hundreds of coin devices. Juke boxes, cigarette vendors, pinball games and slot machines stood in orderly rows, arranged so each type was

easily accessible. At the far end of the warehouse I saw a door labelled OFFICE.

Pushing open this door, I found myself in a large but simply furnished reception room containing only an office switchboard, a typing desk, two file cabinets and a few odd chairs. Centring one wall of the room was a glass-paned door bearing the title M. SWOPE, PRESIDENT. Two similar doors, respectively labelled G. W. CARMICHAEL, CUSTOMER SERVICE and W. H. LONGSTREET, SALES MANAGER opened in the opposite wall. The wall directly across from the reception room entrance was full of windows.

A sleek, brown-eyed blonde with nice accessories was beating the typewriter. She gave me a cool smile which meant: "State your business, please. I'm very busy."

I came right to the point by flashing the identity card which states I am a private dick and am bonded to twenty thousand dollars.

"We don't need a private detective," she said. "The police are doing fine."

I said: "Maybe you don't, but you've got one. One of your bosses hired me."

She raised carefully moulded eyebrows. "Mr. Swope?"

"Longstreet." I took the chair she hadn't offered and stretched out my legs. "What's your name?"

She thought me over before she finally decided to answer. "Marie Kincaid."

"You the whole office force?"

"All that works in. We have ten service men and a crew of salesmen."

"Where are they all?"

"We don't open till eight." She raised her eyes to the wall clock and I followed suit. It was ten to.

I asked: "You been here long?"

"About five minutes."

"I mean have you worked here long?"

"Four years."

"Know about a locket Longstreet wears?"

She glanced at me quickly, then laughed a tinkly, indulgent laugh. "The swearing locket? That's what we call it behind his back. He's a nut on the subject."

"Is he serious about it, or is it just a gag?"

"Oh, he's serious. I wouldn't believe his oath on a Bible, but anything he swears to on the locket is pure truth."

I got to my feet. "I'll take a look at the room. It been cleaned up?"

"Not yet," she said.

Opening the door which bore Carmichael's name, I went in and looked arond. Except for a spot of dried blood on the carpet beneath the desk, there was

little to see. I wandered around looking at the floor, the desk top, the window sills and the bookcase without finding any cigarette butts of queer oriental brand, any Egyptian scarabs or any of the other highly informative clues detectives are always running into.

Marie Kincaid came to the door and looked in at me.

"Know where they found the gun?" I asked.

She pointed to the floor near her feet. "Right there."

"How'd you know?"

She raised her nose. "I saw it. The police brought me over here from home before anything had been moved."

I estimated the distance from the desk to the gun as about twelve feet, which ruled out suicide, as Inspector Day had said.

"Let's go over the story you told the cops," I said. "I understand Longstreet phoned here twice yesterday."

"That' right."

"When did the calls come?"

"The first was at three-thirty for Mr. Carmichael. I plugged him in and they had a terrible argument."

"You listen in?"

Her nose went up again. "I did not! Mr. Carmichael's door was open."

"What was the argument about?"

"I don't know. But Mr. Carmichael swore something awful."

"Where was Swope at the time?"

"In his office." She pointed at his door across the reception room.

"Hmm. How about the second call?"

She said: "That came just at five. I had my hat on ready to leave when the phone rang. It was Mr. Longstreet again, for Mr. Carmichael. I plugged Mr. Carmichael in and, through the open door, heard him say: 'All right. Wait ten minutes and come on over. I'll be there.' "

"Then wha ?"

"I went home. An hour later the police came after me."

I asked: "How do you account for Longstreet being able to phone when he was locked in a cell from three o'clock on?"

Her nose went up a third time. "I don't. You're the detective. You account for it."

"How do you know it was Longstreet phoning?"

"She said it was."

"What?"

"She said it was."

"Who?"

"The switchboard operator. She said: 'Mr. Longstreet calling Mr. Carmichael.' "

I thought this over while I wandered around the room some more. Finally I said: "You told the cops you recognized his voice."

"I thought I heard it in the background," she said quickly.

I shook my head. "You told the cops Longstreet himself phoned. You didn't mention any woman."

"The woman wasn't phoning," she defended. "She was just a switchboard operator somewhere."

"Where?"

"How would I know? Wherever Mr. Longstreet phoned from."

I said: "Did you actually hear Longstreet's voice at all?"

"Well," she hesitated, "I thought I heard it in the background asking the operator to hurry up."

I asked bluntly: "Who paid you to change your story?"

Colour warmed the coolness of her cheeks and her brown eyes threw flame at me. "Just what do you mean by that?"

"I read your statement. You told the cops you definitely recognized Longstreet's voice, and when your questioner remarked that imitation is easy, you said: 'After four years, an imitation wouldn't fool me.' "

"It was the way the police asked questions," she insisted. "They put words in your mouth. I *am* sure it was Mr. Longstreet phoning. I'd be sure even without the voice, because when I plugged in Mr. Carmichael, I told him Mr. Longstreet was phoning." She ended triumphantly: "If it had been anyone else, Mr. Carmichael would have bawled me out afterwards!"

I switched to another subject. "What kind of guy was Carmichael?"

She examined me so appraisingly before answering, I expected some sort of startling disclosure.

But all she said was: "All right. If you like wolves."

"Married?" I asked.

"No. Bachelor."

"What'd he look like?"

Her brow puckered thoughtfully. "Tall and lanky. Slightly stooped. Grey hair. Nothing very individual, except the wolf gleam in his eye."

"How old was he?"

"Forty, forty-five. Somewhere in there."

"Have any enemies?"

She shook her head. "None I know of."

"Any arguments recently?"

"Only the one over the phone with Mr. Longstreet." Some inner thought brought her up short. "Except . . ." She shook her head in self-impatience. "That wouldn't count."

"What wouldn't?"

"Nothing. It's nothing to do with the murder."

I let my eyes harden over. "Listen, sister. If you know something, loosen up fast."

"It's nothing," she insisted. "It would only start gossip."

I said: "I don't spread gossip. Let's have it."

Reluctantly, she said: "It's Mrs. Swope. I think she and Carmichael were carrying on." She paused, then rushed on, apparently wanting to unload it fast once she had started. "The other night I forgot my purse and came back for it after closing. They were in Mr. Carmichael's office and didn't hear me come in. I heard him say: 'It's got to stop, Isobel. Suppose Marden found out?' Mrs. Swope said, 'Suppose he does? I really think he'd be glad.' Then after a while Mr. Carmichael said: 'I won't be party to breaking up a home. Especially that of my own partner. It's got to stop.' I heard Mrs. Swope begin to cry, and she said: 'You're tired of me, that's all.' I left then and didn't hear any more."

I said thoughtfully: "The spurned mistress motive, eh? Worth checking." Then I had an inspiration. "That switchboard operator you mentioned. Remember her voice?"

The secretary looked doubtful. "You mean could I identify it?"

"I mean do you remember it? How it sounded? Whether you'd ever heard it before?"

Her head moved back and forth slowly. "You don't remember switchboard operators' voices. It was just a voice."

"Could it have been Mrs. Swope?"

Her eyes went wide. "Mrs. Swope! Why ever would she pretend to be a switchboard operator?"

"Maybe she had a code arrangement with Carmichael," I said. "With her husband in the same office, she'd hardly phone and give her own name."

She looked doubtful. "But suppose Mr. Longstreet had been here when she called? She'd have felt kind of silly."

"Who knew Longstreet was gone?" I asked.

She looked less doubtful. "Everyone. He'd been talking about going up to his summer camp for weeks. Mrs. Swope would have known that he left at noon yesterday." She looked down at the tiny watch on her wrist. "Eight o'clock. Time I got back to work."

She turned and went back to her desk. I moved back into the reception room just as the outer door opened and Marty O'Brien came in. Marty had been a muscle man back in the days of the now defunct extortion ring, but I hadn't see him around in recent years. Probably he had been in jail.

He said: "Hi, Marie. Boss in yet?" And then he saw me.

He didn't say anything. Just looked.

"Hello, Marty," I said.

He nodded.

Marie said: "You're the first one here," and went on with her typing.

Marty threw me another dead-

pan look and drifted out again.

"That one of your salesmen?" I asked Marie.

She said: "Our best."

The door opened again and a smooth-cheeked, middle-aged man entered. In a sleek, pointed-nose and thin-lipped sort of way he was handsome. He wore expensive clothes and rimless eyeglasses with an air of needing both.

His face was all set in a big smile for Marie, but it faded when he saw she had company.

"Good morning, Mr. Swope," Marie said in a prim, secretarial voice.

Swope doled her out an adulterated version of the original smile and gave me an inquiring glance.

"Manville Moon," I said, showing him my license card. "Retained by Longstreet."

His brows knit. "I see."

He failed to offer his hand, but stood chewing his lip while he thought me over. Finally he seemed to come to a decision.

"Come in," he said, and preceded me to his office.

When we were seated and he had offered me a cigar, which I politely refused after noting the brand, he leaned back and crossed hands over his stomach.

"I've told the police everything I know about this terrible affair," he said. "But of course I'll be glad to give any further help I can."

"Fine. Will you just run over what you told the police?"

He raised his shoulders and let them fall again. "It wasn't much, I'm afraid. I knew nothing about the two phone calls until Marie told of them when the police were here. I left at four-thirty yesterday, and didn't know anything had happened until a policeman came to my home about six."

"Know what Carmichael and Longstreet could have been arguing about over the phone? That is, if it was Longstreet."

He shook his head. "They always got along. We all did. Why, we grew up together, the three of us. We were playmates in grammar school." A reminiscent smile spread across his face. "We even chased the same girl. In high school Mrs. Swope went with all three of us before she finally settled on me."

"Could your wife have been the cause of the argument?"

He frowned. "Of course not! They sometimes joked about both remaining bachelors because of Mrs. Swope, but purely in fun. She hadn't gone with either of them for five years before our marriage. And we've been married twenty-two years."

I said: "Do you think it actually was Longstreet who phoned yesterday?"

He looked uncomfortable. "Marie is sure of it. And I can

think of no reason she would lie."

"How do you account for his being able to phone at three-thirty and again at five, when he was locked in a cell from three on?"

He shrugged. "I make no attempt to account for it. The police are paid to unravel such questions." His fingers drummed on the desk top. "I don't understand how he got in jail in the first place. When he left at noon yesterday, he was intending to drive up for a week at his camp on the river. He'd planned it for weeks, and I know he intended to start at one o'clock. By two-thirty he should have been there, so what was he doing in a bar in town?"

Suddenly an expression of amazed inspiration crossed his face. "I just thought of a possible explanation!"

"Yeah?"

"I haven't been down to the jail yet. How do we know the man in jail is Longstreet?"

That jolted me. Thinking back, I couldn't remember anyone identifying Longstreet, and no one who knew him had looked over the prisoner.

I said: "About two-forty pounds, grizzled hair, false teeth, hairy eyebrows that curve upwards like horns, and an expression like a kid getting ready to heave a snowball at a high hat."

The enthusiasm faded from Swope's face. "That's Willard to a T."

"It's still a straw," I said. "How about dropping down and looking him over?"

He glanced at his watch. "Can't this morning. Be glad to this afternoon. Is that all you want of me?" He glanced at his watch again.

"Not quite. Assuming Longstreet did commit the murder, what motive could he have?"

His lips curled in a faint smile. "We have a business contract leaving our stock to the surviving partners. Half of Carmichael's interest in this business is motive enough. And in addition, Longstreet is primary beneficiary to a fifty thousand dollar insurance policy on Carmichael."

"How'd Carmichael happen to carry a policy like that?" I asked.

"We all did. If I died, the money went to Carmichael, with Longstreet as secondary beneficiary. Longstreet's p o l i c y named me, with Carmichael as secondary beneficiary. I was s e c o n d a r y on Carmichael's policy. It's not an unusual business arrangement. Quite common in partnerships."

I said: "How did the murderer get in and out of here without being seen? Don't you have a watchman?"

"No. We have adequate locks, a burglar alarm system and are protected by Burns."

"About Carmichael." I said. "What kind of guy was he?"

He frowned down at his hand, which beat a swift march on the desk top. "George was a good business man and an excellent partner." The sentence ended on a slightly raised note, as though an unspoken phrase beginning with "but" should have been attached to it.

I said: "But what?"

He glanced at me, startled. "What are you? A mind reader?"

"Just a guesser. What was wrong?"

His expression was reluctant, as one unwilling to speak ill of the dead. "I suppose it was more virtue than fault. He was too strait-laced."

After Marie Kincaid's evaluation of Carmichael as a wolf, the answer amused me. Fleetingly a quotation passed through my mind. Something like: "Women and men see friends through different eyes."

I said: "About women?"

"No. He was human enough, I suppose. P e r h a p s strait-laced isn't the right word. Unforgiving would be better. He gave absolute loyalty to his friends and demanded the same of them."

"Hardly sounds like a fault."

"Perhaps not," he admitted. "Except he carried it too far. As an example, we used to retain a lawyer named Howard Tattersall. He's an excellent lawyer and has saved the firm considerable money in law suits. He also happens to be a minor stockholder in the company, owns about five per cent of the common stock. About a month ago we were preparing to offer a few new shares for sale on the open market to help finance opening a branch in another city. Tattersall, of course, had advance information and a few hours before our release, he dumped his entire holdings on the market. The sudden dumping of such a large block caused a temporary drop in price, and before it could recover, Tattersall rebought his own stock plus part of the new issue without it costing him a cent. His total gain was about twenty thousand dollars, and George was furious. He insisted that Tattersall be kicked off the payroll immediately."

I said: "I think I'd agree with him about that."

Swope shook his head impatiently. "Y o u misunderstand. What I gave was merely the bare outline of the transaction, and actually there were several ramifications. One was that a speculating broker took a flyer and bore the brunt of the loss. It didn't cost our firm a cent. But George remained adamant, so we switched lawyers, thereby losing the best corporate legal advice in town." He studied his tapping fingers glumly, s t i l l vexed by his late partner's stubbornness.

"Was Tattersall sore?" I asked.

He looked up again. "Naturally. We're a fat account."

I kept my tone casual. "Sore enough to do anything about it?"

"Do anything?" He frowned. "You mean like s h o o t Carmichael?"

"Yeah?"

For a minute he brooded over the question, not liking it too much. "I haven't the slightest idea," he said finally. " My only relations with Tattersall were business ones and I don't know what kind of person he is otherwise."

Then the door began to open slowly, as though the person on the other side were hesitant to disturb us. Swope watched it expectantly, then his expression soured to a frown as the door finally swung fully open. Our interruptor was a short woman, this side of forty-five and beginning to spread. Probably she had once been beautiful, but corsets and cosmetics no longer could hide middle age. She wore expensive clothes that looked altogether too young for her.

Swope said: "Didn't Miss Kincaid say I was busy, Isobel?"

I guess that this was Mrs. Swope, and she didn't miss that while Swope familiarly referred to the secretary as "Marie" in conversation, she was "Miss Kincaid" to his wife.

Isobel said: "I'm sorry. I have to see you. Will you be long?" Her tone was a curious mixture of embarrassed apology and determination.

Swope looked at his watch. "We're nearly finished. You may as well stay, now you're here." He performed belated introductions. "This is Mr. Moon, Isobel. Mr. Moon, my wife."

I asked her how she did and offered the chair I had left when she entered.

She said: "No. Keep it," and took another in the corner.

I said: "I was just leaving, Mrs. Swope." Then to her husband: "One more question and I won't bother you any more. Are you familiar with a locket Longstreet has?"

The colour drained from Mrs. Swope's face, leaving it stark white behind its over-supply of rouge.

Swope said: "I've seen it. Why?"

"Know the s t o r y connected with it?"

He knit his brows thoughtfully. "Some silly sentimental thing, as I remember. Left to him by his mother or someone. He takes oaths on it. I always thought he was a little hipped on the subject. What about it?"

"Nothing. Just curious."

I was watching Mrs. Swope. Her colour began to come back, but she was still obviously shaken. With a sudden flash of inspiration I combined Long-

street's mention of the locket as a gift from a girl when he was seventeen, with Swope's casual reference to his wife's high school romances, coming out with the interesting answer that Mrs. Swope could be the locket's donor.

I said: "I've got to go. Glad to have met you, Mrs. Swope."

She dipped her head in my direction without meeting my eyes.

Three men had come into the reception room while I was closeted with Swope. Two I recognized as compatriots of Marty O'Brien in bygone extortion ring days, but could not recall their names. The third was Tiny Sartt, a flat-headed, bow-legged killer with a criminal record longer than MacArthur's war record.

I said: "Hello, Tiny. You a star salesman here, too?"

His constantly darting eyes touched my face and moved away. "Hello, Moon."

"Hello, what?"

"Mr. Moon," he corrected. His eyes darted at me and down again.

I said to Marie: "What's the name of the outfit over you?"

"Riverside Seed Company."

"How do you get there?"

"You have to go outside and use the main building entrance."

A visit to the Riverside Seed Company got me nothing that I hadn't already learned from Warren Day. The Rex Amusement Corporation closed at five, but the seed company stayed open an hour later. At about five-thirty the whole office force had been startled by what my informant described as a "terrific blam," and one of the clerks said: "That's a shot!"

Nearly everyone in the office, about twelve people, had gone to investigate. They found the entrance to the place downstairs unlocked, entered in a group and found the body. No one had seen the murderer leave.

The Drake Hotel is as expensive as the Jefferson, but in a quieter, more snobbish way. While not exclusively an apartment hotel, it caters to permanent residents and makes no effort to attract the tourist trade through decorative cocktail lounges and elaborate dance floors. The only entertainment facility offered its guests is a small, clean dining-room which closes at eight nightly.

At the desk I asked for Howard Tattersall's room number.

"Suite four-seventeen," the room clerk said. "I'll ring to see if he's in."

I said: "Never mind. He's expecting me."

The elevator surged upwards like a smooth stroke of a piston and eased to a cushioned halt. Silent doors parted in the middle, disappearing into the walls, and when I stepped out into the

deeply carpeted hall, they slid soundlessly together again.

The silence was almost reverent. As I started down the hall the leather straps of my false leg squeaked and I felt guiltily self-conscious – as though violating the sanctity of a cathedral.

The man who answered my knock at the door of suite four-seventeen was of medium height and beginning to put on weight. Dark hair parted in the middle, was brushed straight back from a wide, short forehead. Heavy black brows surmounted a strong nose and hard, but wide lips clamped around a short briar. He wore a lounging robe.

"Mr. Tattersall?" I asked

He nodded.

"I'm Manville Moon. Your office told me I'd find you home today."

Removing his pipe from his mouth with his right hand, which conveniently prevented him from offering a handshake, he said: "If it's business, I'm sorry, but this is my day off."

"It's business about a murder," I said. "May I come in?"

"Are you police?" he asked sharply.

"Private." I watched his face for a minute, saw no invitation there, and said: "I'm coming in."

He stepped back, swung the door wide and let me go past him into the room. It was a large room, much better furnished than my walkup parlour. Doors on either side of it leading to other rooms made it at least a three-unit apartment. I wondered how many hundred more a month he paid than I did for my three-room flat.

I tried an easy chair, liked it and settled back with a cigar in my mouth. The lawyer remained standing, frowning down at me while I applied flame to the cigar end.

"You've heard of George Carmichael's death," I said finally, making it a statement instead of a question.

"On the radio," he said shortly. "I don't get a morning paper."

"Used to work for him, didn't you?"

He looked displeased and faintly insulted. "I was retained by his firm as legal counsel. They weren't my only account."

"Why'd they drop you?"

"I don't see that it's any of your business," he said testily. "Mind telling me what you want?"

"Not at all. Know Willard Longstreet?"

"Of course. One of the company directors. Sales manager, I believe he calls himself. He also happens to be a neighbour of mine. Lives down the hall."

"Yes. I know. Longstreet retained me to solve the crime. You wouldn't have heard it on the radio, but he's the prime

suspect. Matter of fact, he's in jail."

His eyes showed mild surprise, but no particular concern. "So?"

"His gun was found at the murder scene. Longstreet claims it was kidnapped from his room."

"So?"

"So you and Carmichael had a falling out. So you live within c r a w l i n g distance of Longstreet's door. So where were you yesterday about five-thirty in the afternoon?"

His eyes narrowed. "Pardon me a moment."

Abruptly he did an about face and passed through one of the doors into another room. I heard the click of a phone being raised, got out of my chair quietly and circled towards the door. As I reached it and got my ear near the j a m b, I heard him say, "Right away," and drop the phone back in its cradle.

Circling back to my chair, I settled in it again and was drawing slowly on my cigar when he reentered the room. I looked up and got a surprise.

A sardonic smile lifting the edges of his wide mouth, he leaned in the doorway and accurately pointed an Army automatic at my cigar.

I removed the cigar, but the muzzle failed to follow it, which led me to believe my head was the actual target. I waited for him to speak, but he seemed perfectly content to continue leaning and pointing.

"What am I supposed to do?" I asked finally. "Raise my arms, bark like a dog, or just go home?"

"Just sit," he said. "And keep your mouth shut."

So for twenty minutes I sat and kept my mouth shut. When my cigar became a stub, I set it carefully on the ash stand next to my chair, moving my hand slowly because I could see the automatic's hammer was back and the safety off. At the end of twenty minutes a key turned in the outer door's lock.

Anton Strowlski came through the door, nodded to Tattersall and turned his brittle eyes on me.

"*Mr.* Moon, isn't it?" he asked with heavy sarcasm, deeply underlining the "*Mr.*"

I didn't feel called on to reply.

"Stand up." he said.

I rose slowly, turned my back and raised my arms without waiting for the order. Anton's hand snaked under my armpit from behind, removed my P-38, then carefully p a t t e d my pockets.

"Turn a r o u n d," he commanded.

Facing my host again, I dropped my arms. Anton drew a short dainty automatic from his side pocket, a twin of the one he

had lost to the police, removed his smart snap-brim hat and dropped it over the gun.

"Only a .32," he said pleasantly. "But I use dum-dums. It makes a hole like a saucer." The mock-pleasantness left his voice and his lips drew thin. "We're going out now, and if you make a move I don't like, you get it."

He waved me towards the door, then followed, keeping a pace distance between us. Tattersall stayed home, presumably not caring to participate in murder on his day off, but just before the door shut behind us he said: "It's been very pleasant, Mr. Moon. Do come again."

I said: "If I can't make it, drop in on me. I'll be in the river." It wasn't good, but it was the best I could do with that hat-covered little gun aimed at my back.

Our trip down was uneventful. Just two well-dressed men, one of the modern school who wears his hat in elevators, the other with his politely draped over his fist. It stayed there even after we left the elevator, clear across the lobby, down the steps and into the waiting Buick coach at the curb.

Anton and I shared the roomy back seat. Our bullet-headed chaffeur was a stranger. Getting in I caught a quick glimpse of his knuckle-bent profile and knew I had never seen him before. As we pulled away, I started to memorize the back of his head, on the remote chance that I'd ever get an opportunity to look for it.

It was an interesting head. The neck was a weal of creased muscle that bulged out beyond the flattened rear of his skull, and the ears were mere blobs of broken gristle bunched into shapelessness.

Without instruction he wheeled the car through traffic towards the south edge of town. He kept the speed moderate until we reached the river road, then he opened up and we rolled along at high-way speed.

Anton spoke only once during the trip, when we reached a long, straight stretch and bullet-head pressed his foot to the floor.

"Cut the horses," Anton said curtly.

Our speed immediately dropped to a sedate fifty-five.

A few miles later we slowed down and turned on to a dirt road. We passed a farm house, went on about two miles without seeing another and the road began to grow rougher. Now entirely away from public view, Anton uncovered his gun and put his hat back on his head. I glanced down at the gun and got my second shocking surprise of the day. Only this one was pleasant.

They say that every criminal eventually makes some stupid mistake which ends his career. Anton Strowlski had just made

his and exceeded the criminal's prerogative of stupidity. His neat and deadly little automatic had the safety tightly on.

Selfishly I kept the secret to myself. My right hand slashed sidewise and the hard edge of my palm caught him directly between the eyes. I had learned that blow with the Rangers, and twice used it on German sentries. It worked just as effectively on Polish-American gunmen. I felt the bone crunch and he was dead before his automatic dropped to the seat between us.

Quietly easing him back in the far corner, I picked up the gun, flipped off the safety catch and settled back to enjoy the rest of the ride.

The road grew rougher and rougher, finally becoming nothing but weed-choked ruts. Bullethead halted the car alongside a dense growth of bushes.

"This O.K.?" he asked, peering out at the tangled cluster of undergrowth.

"Just fine," I said.

Startled, he spun in his seat and gaped at me and my lifeless seatmate. Then his hand dove towards a shoulder holster. I let him bring his gun as far as the top of the front seat.

Anton had told the truth. It made a hole like a saucer.

The doorman at the Drake Hotel gave me a more courteous greeting than I deserved after parking a Buick containing two dead men at his curb. The elevator operator remembered my previous visit too, and shot to the fourth floor without waiting for instructions.

I had recovered my P-38 from one of Anton's pockets and found his key to four-seventeen in another. Approaching Tattersall's door with the former in my right hand the latter in my left, I unlocked the door, kicked it open and charged in.

My dramatics were unnecessary. Howard Tattersall sat in the same chair I had occupied while enjoying my cigar. But he wasn't smoking, because a bullet had left too little of his mouth to hold a cigar.

He slumped sidewise with one arm hanging over the edge of the chair so that his fingertips just touched the floor. The other hand lay in his lap gripping the Army automatic.

Kneeling next to the body I sniffed the gun muzzle. It had been fired.

Rising, I entered the room from which Tattersall had phoned and found the telephone standing on a desk by the window. I dialled homicide and asked for Inspector Day.

"Moon," I said, when he finally came to the phone. "I'm at suite four-seventeen in the Drake Hotel. Dead lawyer here named Tattersall."

Day asked: "Murder?"

"Can't say. Either suicide or framed to look like it. Unless you want an unscientific opinion."

"Give it," the inspector said.

"Murder, then. No evidence. Just a hunch."

Day was silent for a minute, then he said: "I'll send Hannegan. Got to take a nap before I drop dead."

As though bringing up an afterthought, I said casually: "There are also two bodies in a Buick parked in front of the hotel. License 27-309."

"What!" Day yelped. "What you got there? A massacre?"

"Just a rough party." I gave him a quick sketch of what had happened.

When I finshed the resume he asked: "Think Tattersall bumped Carmichael?"

"Possibly."

"Wish you hadn't eliminated all the witnesses," he complained. "Complicates things."

"If they were still alive, I wouldn't be."

"That's not a bad idea either," he growled and hung up.

Glancing at my watch I was surprised to discover it was only a quarter to eleven.

Beginning to feel the effect of only three hours' sleep, I found a sidestreet bar-room and took on a rye and water. I was the only customer at that time of day, and as I dawdled over my second drink, the bartender dropped a coin in the record machine to play a Phil Harris number. When it played out, I picked a nickel from my change on the bar and started over to play another. Then I noticed a pinball game against the wall. Right next to it stood a cigarette vendor.

I changed my mind and went back to my stool. Three coin machines in this small neighbourhood bar had started a train of thought. I began visualizing various stores I had been in recently, trying to remember whether or not they were equipped with coin machines. The drugstore near my flat had one pinball game. The confectionery next to it had one. I thought of two filling stations and a barber shop where I had noticed them, and suddenly the tremendous size of the business registered on me. I could not think of a single tavern, restaurant, drugstore, grocery, filling station or barber shop I had been in during recent months which was not equipped with one or more coin devices. I mentioned to the barkeep.

"You own this place?" I asked.

"Yeah," he admitted.

"Where you rent your coin machines?"

He rubbed his chin. "Why?"

"Because I want to know."

"You a cop?"

"No."

"What are you?"

I said: "I'm the guy just asked

you a question. Get up an answer before I kick your teeth in."

He widened his eyes at me, sucked in his breath and said: "Fellow named Sartt."

"Tiny?"

"That's the guy."

I said: "Next time he's in, tell him to take 'em out. My company's taking over this territory."

The bartender paled. "Listen, mister. I can't tell Sartt that. I'd end up in the gutter."

"You'll end up in the gutter if you don't."

He ran a hand over his forehead. "Geez, mister. I'm just trying to make a living. I don't want any damn machines in here at all. But I want trouble less than I don't want machines. If you guys start squeezing me between you, I lose no matter which way I jump. Why don't you talk to Sartt, and I'll take whichever machines the both of you say."

I grinned at him. "Relax and have a drink. I was just fishing for information. Now I've got it."

Some of his colour came back, but now he looked worried. "You are a cop, ain't you?"

I shook my head. "Just a guy who doesn't like Tiny Sartt. Forget it. You won't get in trouble."

I had the final segment of the puzzle.

I went home and shaved, ate a quick breakfast and took a cab to police headquarters. I found Warren Day asleep on the cot in his office. I shook him awake.

"Go away," he said.

"Get up. I've got your case solved for you."

He sat up and rubbed his eyes, groped over to the desk and found his glasses. "What time is it?"

"About noon."

Sinking into his chair, he took a pint bottle from a bottom drawer, swished a slug around in his mouth, swallowed and started to put it back.

I said: "Do I drink alone when you come to my house?"

Grumpily he re-opened the drawer, examined the bottle's liquor level over the top of his glasses and handed it to me. He watched suspiciously as I raised it to my lips and said: "O.K. That's enough." before I even downed the first swallow. I handed it back after the second.

"If you're going to get me up at four in the morning to break your cases," I said, "you've got to keep me awake."

He fumbled a dead cigar from his ash tray, dusted it off and popped it in his mouth. "O.K. Spill your story."

"Not yet. I've got it figured out, but we have to prove it. I've no urge to be sued."

"Oh," he said. "You got a theory."

"Sure. What have you got?"

"Nothing," he admitted. "I'm listening."

"This is what I want. You have Marden Swope, Mrs. Swope and Marie Kincaid picked up separately and brought here. Keep them apart and I'll talk to them one at a time."

He eyed me fixedly over his glasses. "What do I pick them up on?"

I waved that aside impatiently. "That's your problem. If you're leary of warrants, lure them down. Tell 'em the jail's on fire and you need a bucket brigade. Tell them anything." Then I remembered something. "Swope was coming in anyway to identify Longstreet. He suggested your prisoner might be someone else."

Day snapped erect. "He what!"

"Don't get excited. Just a screwy idea he had. It's Longstreet, all right."

He leaned back in his chair again. "And when all these people get here?"

"I'll talk to them."

He scratched his head. "Knowing how you like to grandstand, I don't suppose you'd outline your case first?"

"Don't suppose I would."

"O.K.," he said wearily. "What can I lose? I haven't got a case anyway."

He picked up his phone, gave the necessary orders and we sat back to wait.

Inspector Day sent out for sandwiches and coffee after pointedly informing me that my share of the bill would be thirty-five cents, and collecting it before he ordered. We had just finished our uninspiring lunch when Hannegan stuck his head in the door.

"They're all here," he said.

"Separate?" I asked.

"None of them even know the others are here.'

"Send in Mrs. Swope," I ordered.

Hannegan looked at Day, his eyebrows raised.

"I'm just a figurehead around here," the inspector said bitterly. "Don't pay any attention to me."

The lieutenant shrugged, started to smile and wiped it off fast when Day roared: "Get a move on!"

"Yes sir," he said, and backed out hurriedly.

"See what happens when I let you give orders?" Day asked aggrievedly. "Discipline shot to hell!" He rubbed his bald spot and mumbled: "Impertinent pup."

"He didn't say a word," I said in Hannegan's defence.

The inspector snapped, "I know what he was thinking!"

A knock sounded. Day growled "Come in," and Hannegan opened the door nervously.

He stepped aside to let in Mrs.

Swope, then asked the space between Day and me if we wanted him to remain. It was impossible to determine which of us he was addressing.

I nodded imperceptibly and Day said: "You can stay if you keep your mouth shut."

Mrs. Swope waited uncertainly, kneading her hands together and looking frightened. I introduced her to the inspector and asked her to have a chair. She looked around hesitantly, finally deciding on the one farthest from Warren Day's desk. I walked over and looked down at her.

"Ever hear of truth serum, Mrs. Swope?" I asked.

She looked puzzled, then nodded doubtfully.

"We gave it to Longstreet, and his locket couldn't help. He told us all about it."

I might have told her that the world would end in five minutes. She turned paper-white and clutched at her throat. "No," she whispered.

"Don't hold it against him, Mrs. Swope. He meant to keep his oath, but you can't fight truth serum. He had to tell." I made my voice sympathetic.

She asked in a dead voice: "Everything?"

I played the hunch on which my whole case was based, holding my breath as I played it, because if I were wrong, Mrs. Swope would know my whole attack was bluff.

I said: "Even that you were the girl who gave him the locket twenty-seven years ago."

It worked. The shock of it, superimposed on the shock of Longstreet breaking his oath, nearly heaped her on the floor in a faint. She managed to retain consciousness, but all resistance was knocked out of her. The hopeless eyes she turned up at me were utterly convinced I knew everything.

"What do you want of me?" she asked.

"We just want you to clear up a point or two. How you learned of the plot, for example."

She was too far gone for suspicion, but she said in dull surprise: "Didn't Willard tell that?"

"We didn't ask him," I said easily. "It's not an important point. We know you warned him, after making him swear on the locket he'd never tell. We know why you warned him . . . That you couldn't bear to see an old sweetheart framed, even though your husband was the framer . . ."

"Framed?" she asked wonderingly. "I didn't know it was a frame-up when I told Willard."

"I was merely using a figure of speech," I rapidly backtracked. "You see, we know enough of the story so that we have already arrested your hus-

band. He's beyond all possible help, so you have nothing to lose by telling us how you learned the plot."

Her head drooped and she gazed helplessly down at her hands. "I overheard them in Marden's office."

"Overheard who?"

"Marden and Miss Kincaid. It was a week ago. I dropped in to see Marden, and Miss Kincaid was in his office. The door was open a crock and I stopped to listen. I don't know why, because I'm not a suspicious woman. After listening, I thought it best Marden did not suspect I had heard, so I left without going in."

"What did you hear?"

"I heard Miss Kincaid say: 'Suppose at the last minute Longstreet changes his mind about going to camp?' Marden said: 'I thought of that. Anton will tail him when he leaves the office at noon. If he looks like changing his mind, Anton has orders to stick a gun in his ribs and make sure he's at camp by four at the latest.' "

I suddenly understood a lot of things which had not previously been clear. "How'd you know what they were talking about?" I asked.

"I didn't," Mrs. Swope said dully. "If I'd had any idea . . ." Her voice faded away for a minute, then went on: "I'd have spoken to Marden. I'd . . ." She looked up at me helplessly. "I don't know what I'd have done. I didn't know what it all meant, and I kept brooding about it until I was nearly sick, and it got closer and closer to the time, and finally the actual morning arrived without my doing anything about it, and I couldn't stand it any more so I went to the office and told Willard just before he left at noon."

She began to cry, making no sound, but with her shoulders jiggling up and down in jerky rhythm as tears slid across her face.

I said to Hannegan: "Got all that?"

He looked up from the notebook in which he had been unobtrusively writing during the entire interview. "Yeah. Got it all."

"Have someone type it up in the form of a statement for Mrs. Swope to sign. And while it's being typed, bring in Marden Swope. Get Longstreet from his cell too."

He said: "Check," rose from his chair and escorted Mrs. Swope from the room.

As the door closed behind them, Warren Day burst out: "What in hell's going on? All that nonsense about truth serum!"

I grinned at him. "Worked, didn't it?"

"Is Marden Swope the killer?" he demanded.

"I doubt it," I said, enjoying myself. "Can't tell yet."

He peered at me sourly over his glasses. "Damn grandstander, he muttered.

A knock sounded and Day said: "Come in."

It was Marden Swope, followed by Hannegan.

I said to Swope: "You've met Inspector Day, haven't you?"

"Yes. Yesterday."

Day grunted something unintelligible, then said begrudgingly: "Have a chair."

Another knock sounded and Day said: "Come in."

It was Willard Longstreet, flanked by two bluecoats. He looked the group over without speaking, then moved over and took a chair next to me. Apparently he had gotten some sleep, for he looked rested. But his clothes were in terrible shape and he needed a shave.

In a self-conscious voice Marden Swope said: "Hello Willard."

Longstreet nodded at his partner gravely, no sign of humour in his eyes.

"Swope suggested you might be an impostor," I told Longstreet. "We brought him down to identify you."

A mischievous twinkle replaced the serious expression in Longstreet's eyes. "What made you think that, Marden?"

Marden Swope said embarrassedly: "It's Willard, all right, Mr. Moon."

"What made you think I wasn't" Longstreet asked.

Swope remained silent, so I said: "He couldn't understand how you got in jail. Weren't you supposed to be up at your camp yesterday?"

"Planned to be. Changed my mind."

"Why?"

Longstreet eyed me quizzically. "No law against it, is there?"

"None I know of. Especially since you had a good idea of what awaited you at the camp."

Swope asked: "You through with me now?"

"Not quite," I said. I turned back to Longstreet. "I have the case solved."

There was a sharp click as Longstreet's upper plate dropped and was snapped back in place by his tongue. Swope licked his lips and watched me curiously.

"Funny thing about this case," I said to Warren Day. "Longstreet hired me to find out something he already knew. That probably sounds silly, and it was in a way. But Longstreet couldn't figure any other way to handle the impossible situation he found himself in."

I paused to let tension build up in the room. The only reason I occasionally grandstand is because Day hates me for it. He was glaring at me now.

"Another peculiar thing about the case," I went on, "was that all of the evidence was false. So to solve the case, you had to ignore the evidence and depend on pure reason. That's why the police fell down."

Glancing sidewise at Day, I noted his nose now shone pure white against the inflamed background of his face.

I said: "The first premise I worked on was that Longstreet here couldn't possibly have committed the murder. The police should have decided that at once also, but they preferred to play around with weird theories about his pulling a Houdini jail break and then breaking back in again. My second premise was that Longstreet deliberately got himself jailed.

"Combining these two facts, you immediately get some inevitable conclusions. First, Longstreet knew someone was after him, and the forces involved were too much for him to fight. So he chose jail as the only safe place to be. Second, he had been framed for Carmichael's murder. Luckily for Longstreet, his being in jail not only made him temporarily safe, but gave him an iron-clad alibi and upset the framer's applecart.

"The third inescapable conclusion is that the testimony of Marie Kincaid was a lie from beginning to end. There never were any phone calls. Her story was prepared in advance of the crime. If I hadn't, out of pure cussedness, pointed out a gunman named Anton Strowlski to a cop, which prevented him from phoning Marie and telling her the plot had gone sour, she never would have told the story she did. And after finally learning too late that Longstreet had been safely in jail all the time, she tried to wriggle out of her sworn statement by inventing another story which never happened.

"And the last obvious conclusion is that from the moment Longstreet learned Carmichael had been murdered, he was able to figure out exactly what had happened."

Marden Swope was gazing at me in wide-eyed amazement. Longstreet's face, directed at his partner, contained an expression of unholy glee. Warren Day had half risen, and glared at Longstreet.

"If you knew the answer all along," he rapped, "why'd you keep quiet?"

"That's the silly part of the whole affair," I answered for Longstreet. "He has a sacred locket he takes oaths on. *Before* Mrs. Swope warned him he was on the spot, she made him swear on the locket that he'd never repeat a word. That left him in the peculiar position of being framed for a murder and unable to

say anything in his own defence. He was literally between the devil and the deep blue sea. So he hired me to expose what he already knew."

Day said: "He chose the devil," guffawed ferociously and suddenly stopped when no one else smiled.

Ignoring the inspector, I went on: "In a desperate effort to keep his oath, he gave me twenty-hours to solve the case. If I hadn't made it, I suspect he would have talked anyway. Keeping the oath was worth ten thousand dollars to him, but I doubt that he wanted to gamble his life on it." I looked at Longstreet. "Right?"

He merely grinned without answering.

Swope, suddenly coming to life, rose from his chair. "What was that about my wife?" he demanded.

"I said: "Shut up and sit down."

He looked at me whitely, his eyes narrowed to slits. Hannegan crossed the room, put his hand on Swope's chest and pushed him back in his chair.

Warren Day snarled at me: "If you're through grandstanding now, spill the works. Is this guy the killer?"

I took him out of his misery. "No. It was a good old-fashioned gang killing. Swope ordered it and Marie Kincaid was an accessory. If Longstreet had received the warning earlier, he'd probably have skipped town. But when he got it, Anton Strowlski was already on his tail. And when he couldn't shake Anton, he got himself arrested.

"What gave me the first steer was that even after his alibi was established, Longstreet insisted on staying in jail until the case was solved. The only reason I could see for that was that he was afraid of something, and I learned what he was afraid of by a visit to the Rex Amusement Corporation and a conversation with a bartender. The corporation's salesmen are the finest bunch of professional extortionists and killers you ever saw. They've spread coin machines all over town by delivering them and telling proprietors to keep them. You can pass that to the rackets squad.

"So it was all of them Longstreet was afraid of. He'd been put on the spot in typical gangster fashion. Swope here was tired of splitting three ways, so he had Carmichael killed and framed Longstreet. Howard Tattersall, who had access to Longstreet's room, obtained the gun, probably on Swope's promise that he'd be made a partner. But Swope wasn't splitting with anyone. After Tattersall served his purpose, he conveniently committed suicide.

"Swope picked a time he knew

Longstreet would be at his river camp alone and without an alibi. Undoubtedly one of Swope's killers was waiting at the camp to arrange Longstreet's suicide in remorse for having slain his partner.

"Marie was merely a tool. She's probably Swope's mistress."

Swope said: "I want a lawyer."

Paying no attention to him, Warren Day said: "So after all this circus, we still don't know the name of the actual killer. I'm going to find out right now!"

It turned out to be Tiny Sartt. The state rewarded him with a free trip to another world. Swope got life, Marie five years, Longstreet my apology and permission to call me "Moon," and I got ten thousand dollars for eleven hours work, which is nine thousand, nine hundred and seventy-five more than my standard day rate.

Every issue of the SAINT is star-studded with the best of the finest writers in the field.

If you have missed any of the issues listed below, here is your last opportunity to complete your file . . .

A few copies of these issues are still available . . . Just fill in the coupon below . . . When ordering please circle issues desired.

FICTION PUBLISHING COMPANY 1063

30 East 42nd St., New York 17, N. Y.

Kindly send me the issues of the SAINT circled below

One copy – 35¢; Three copies – $1.00; Six copies – $1.75

I enclose $..... in full payment, no charge for postage.

Sept. 1961	Dec. 1961	Jan. 1962	Feb. 1962
Mar. 1962	May 1962	June 1962	July 1962
Aug. 1962	Sept. 1962	Oct. 1962	Nov. 1962
Jan. 1963	Feb. 1963	Mar. 1963	April 1963
Sept. 1963			

Name .....

Address .....

City..... Zone..... State.....

Please Print

letter to the editor

by Morris Hershman

Mr. Bruno Fischer,
Mystery Writers of America,
New York, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Fischer

I'm writing to you because I've heard of you and I want your advice about something. My friends say I ought to be a real writer, anyhow. I write letters very good.

What I figure, though, is that maybe you can tell me if I ought to be as scared as I am.

Like I say, this thing really happened. If you want to make a story out of it maybe I could collaborate with you on it. I've got the story; all you'd have to do is write it up.

Anyhow, this happened to me on Brighton Beach. In Coney Island, you know, in Brooklyn.

When I go out there I usually bring a blanket in a paper bag, unroll it on the sand, take off my pants and shirt and, with

---

There is a haunting quality to this short-short, first written for CROOK'S TOUR, the 1953 anthology of the Mystery Writers of America, by long-time MWA member (and three times Board member) Morris Hershman. Mr. Hershman, frequently anthologized and translated into several European languages, is the author of several novels and many short stories. He lives in New York.

Copyright 1953 by Popular Publications, Inc.
Reprinted by permission of the author and the author's agents,
Scott Meredith Literary Agency, Inc.

my bathing suit already on instead of shorts, try to catch me a little sun. I park myself near the peeling wooden sign that says Bay 2. A lot of people near my own age come out there, in the twenties and thirties. I can lie on the sand and look up at the boardwalk. Though it's plastered with signs saying that you need shirts and pants to go walking up there, that doesn't really matter.

It happened this afternoon, the thing I want to tell you about. You know what it's been like in the city: 93 in the shade, people dropping like flies. Even on the beach today, the sand was like needles under your feet.

When I'd waited for half an hour and none of my friends showed up, I went into the water. Usually I walk in up to my ankles, then dive in to get the rest of me good and wet.

Well, I swam out past the first buoy. Like all the rest of them, it's red on top and with what looks like barnacles on the sides. All of a sudden I saw a guy coming almost head-on into me. About twenty feet or so away I heard another man yell, "Sam!" and then there was the sound of bubbles.

The fellow had disappeared (the guy I'd been looking at; call him number one so you won't get confused) and then he showed up above water with the crook of his arm on the other guy's neck, pulling him in.

"This man's hurt!" he shouted.

I can scream pretty good, too. "Give 'em room!"

On the shore they tried artificial respiration. I went along to watch the hefty lifeguard in his white shirt, the victim's legs between, his jumping up and down like clockwork. I won't forget it as long as I live.

How long that's going to be, maybe you can guess.

Anyway, this fellow who'd brought him in stood off to one side. He wore a bright red rubber cap and a bathing suit with white stripes at the sides. He was a beanpole of a guy, the kind who probably never stops eating, though. His large brown eyes stared right past me.

"Poor guy, whoever he was," Beanpole said to anybody who'd listen. Then he stopped and pointed. "Look!"

I did, but all I saw was the usual beach scene: the kids selling ice cream or tin-bottomed paper cartons of orange drink or cans of cold chocolate, or cellophane bags with potato knishes inside. You can always recognize the sellers because they wear white sun helmets like in movies about big-game hunters in Africa.

At my left a guy wandered from girl to girl, trying to strike up a talk; "operating," it's called nowadays. A lot of ac-

quaintances run into each other at Bay 2 because they've mostly been to the same summer places: White Roe, Banner Lodge, Tamiment, Lehman, whatever you like.

At one blanket, people gathered around a uke player who was picking out *Blue-Tail Fly.* He stopped to tell a singer something about one of the downtown social clubs for older unmarried people. "I'm going down for a dance tonight at the change-of-life club," he said.

Then I saw what Beanpole had been pointing at. Two men, clearing a path for themselves, inched their way along the lines of blankets. Between them they carried what looked like a white gauze pad folded in two. It turned out to be a stretcher. They covered up the guy with a sheet over his face, so he couldn't breathe.

"I guess they're taking him to the first-aid station," I said to a small blonde next to me, remembering the wooden shack on Bay 6 or 7 that looks like it was on stilts and with a spiral staircase that takes you up to the dispensary.

The blonde shook her head slowly. "No, it's the ambulance for him and then the morgue. I saw him earlier in the day. He was a very good swimmer."

At my side the Beanpole nodded. "He must'a gotten cramps or something. We were way out, past the fourth marker. Nobody in sight except . . ." And he turned to me like he'd just noticed I was there.

I introduced myself. He mumbled that he was glad to know me, but he didn't mention his name. His eyes were hard and bright.

"How much of it did you see?" he asked quietly.

"I saw you practically on top of him and trying to get a grip on him. You did a hero's job out there. Nothing to be ashamed of, believe me!"

I had made up my mind not to go in swimming today, and when my friends came around a little later, I told them what I'd seen and spent the afternoon lying in the sun.

Once I felt somebody's eyes on me. I looked up and there was Beanpole, not too far away. He was asking a girl the name of the book she was reading, but every so often he glanced in my direction. I lay back and closed my eyes and forgot it.

But when I was going home by way of the Brighton Local, I started to ask myself questions. Once I remember I looked up at my reflection in a subway window glass; I might have been a skeleton.

Well, as soon as I got home to Snyder Avenue where I live, I started writing this letter to you. I was supposed to take a shower and go down to a State

of Israel bond rally at Twenty-third and Madison, but I don't think I will. Not tonight. For all I know, maybe I'll never go to a rally again in my life.

It's this way: the blonde girl at the beach told me that the dead guy was a good swimmer. If he'd been in trouble, well, any old hand at swimming knows enough to float around till he can save himself. I'd heard the victim calling, "Sam!" before he went under, like Sam was right near; but Beanpole said he never knew the dead guy.

The idea I've got explains why Beanpole behaved like he did, the way he kept looking at me. I've been thinking hard, and now what I saw looks completely different. I had told Beanpole, "I saw you practically on top of him." The way I remember it now, Beanpole was holding the guy *under* water, not saving him. Beanpole kept him under water till it made no difference one way or the other.

But maybe I'm wrong. Maybe Beanpole is a right guy, after all. Maybe.

I figure it like this, though: I'm the only one who saw it happen, and he knows that.

Like I say, maybe I'm all wrong. Beanpole could have gotten so bollixed up trying to save the guy he went around afterwards like he'd flipped his lid. He looked calm to me, but maybe some guys carry all their feelings inside them, like a guy does if he's worked up to kill somebody.

Well, that shows what you can think about in the morning. It's almost morning here, and I can look out the window and see dawn touch the rooftops across the street.

I guess I'm all wrong, crazy with the heat or whatever you'd call it.

But it'd be so easy for Beanpole to find me. After all, he knows my name and it's in the phone book. All he has to do is come right now and shoot the top of my head off.

But even if he did the truth would come out. This letter alone is sure to do it. If I hear anybody coming, I'll stop writing and hide it as quick as I can. It'd be found by the police, afterwards. I'm sure Beanpole's name and address were taken this afternoon, and plenty of people got a good look at him.

Anyhow, that's all of it, and like I said at the beginning I want your advice about whether I'm right to be as scared as I am. Should I go to the police and tell them all this?

To show you the way a guy can get nervous, just this minute I could have sworn I felt a draft on the back of my neck, like the door had been quietly opened by somebody, and

(Continued from other side)

You Get 9 Mystery Novels (WORTH $28.20 IN PUBLISHERS' EDITIONS) FOR ONLY $1.00

HERE'S a treasure chest of high-voltage mysteries at a sensational low introductory price! Now you can get Erle Stanley Gardner's seven latest Perry Mason baffiers – six individual full-length, hard-cover books – PLUS a handsome volume containing Perry's *newest* thriller, and TWO MORE top-notch mystery hits. These nine mysteries are worth $28.20 in publishers' editions – but they're YOURS for only $1.00 to introduce you to The Detective Book Club.

The Best NEW Mysteries — for LESS than 97¢ each!

Out of the 300 or more new detective books that come out every year, the Club selects the very "cream of the crop" – by outstanding authors like Erle Stanley Gardner, Agatha Christie, A. A. Fair, Mignon G. Eberhart, and John Creasey. All THESE and many other famous authors have had their books selected by the Club. Many are members themselves!

Club selections are ALL newly published books. As a member you get THREE of them complete in one handsomely-bound triple-volume (an $8.85 to $10.50 value in publishers' editions) for only $2.89.

Take ONLY the books you want

You do NOT have to take a volume every month. You receive a free copy of the Club's "Preview" which will fully describe all coming selections and you may reject any volume before or after receiving it. NO money in advance; NO membership fees. You may cancel membership any time you please.

The Case of the RELUCTANT MODEL
The Case of the BLONDE BONANZA
The Case Of The SPURIOUS SPINSTER
The Case of the ICE-COLD HANDS
The Case of the BIGAMOUS SPOUSE
The Case of the SHAPELY SHADOW
The Case of the Mischievous Doll
The Vanished Virgin

SEND NO MONEY

Mail Postcard for ALL NINE Mysteries

Simply mail postcard promptly and we will send you at once the SEVEN Perry Mason thrillers – PLUS the two other exciting mystery hits – all described on other side. However, this exceptional offer may never be repeated. So don't risk disappointment. Mail postcard AT ONCE to:

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB
Roslyn, L.I., New York

MAIL THIS POSTCARD NOW FOR YOUR NINE MYSTERIES • NO POSTAGE NEEDED

SEND NO MONEY – JUST MAIL THIS POSTCARD 83-251

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB
Roslyn, L.I., New York, 11576

PC

Please enroll me as a member and send me the SIX full-length hard-bound editions of Perry Mason thrillers, PLUS the brand-new 3-in-1 Volume Club selection containing my SEVENTH "Perry Mason" and 2 other great mystery stories. Although worth $28.20 in publishers' editions, I may keep all SEVEN books for only $1.00 (plus a few cents mailing charge) on this sensational introductory offer. If not completely satisfied after one week's examination I may return all books and owe nothing.

I am not obligated to take any specific number of books, and I am to receive advance "Previews" of all future selections. Also, I may reject any volume before or after I receive it, and I may cancel my membership whenever I wish. I need send no money now, but for each future Club triple volume I keep I will send you the low price of only $2.89 (plus a few cents mailing charge) as complete payment within a week. *(Books shipped in U.S.A. only.)*

Mr. }
Mrs. } .....
Miss }
(PLEASE PRINT PLAINLY)

Address .....

City .....Zone....State.....

RAYMOND BURR
Famous as CBS-TV's Perry Mason

Perry Mason Fans!

9 GREAT MYSTERIES including SEVEN "Perry Masons" by Erle Stanley GARDNER

Imagine $28.20 Worth of Top Mysteries (in publishers' original editions) for only $1.00 as a new member

The Case of the ICE-COLD HANDS
$3.50 in Publ. Ed.
BLONDE BONANZA
$2.95 in Publ. Ed.
The Case of the RELUCTANT MODEL
$2.95 in Publ. Ed.
$2.95 in Publ. Ed.
The Case of the SPURIOUS SPINSTER
$2.95 in Publ. Ed.
$2.95 in Publ. Ed.

Yes! TAKE ALL 9 SPINE-TINGLING MYSTERIES

6 HARD-BOUND FULL-SIZE Perry Masons

Plus The Latest PERRY MASON and 2 More great mysteries in this giant "3-in-1" volume

Watch Perry Solve These 6 Tough Cases

1 The Case of the ICE-COLD HANDS

Perry opens the bathroom door. Marvin Freemont is *slumped* in the shower stall — bullet hole in front of his shirt — stone-cold DEAD!

2 The Case of the BLONDE BONANZA

Perry's in hot water now! The testimony to convict his client of MURDER comes from Perry's OWN investigator!

3 The Case of the RELUCTANT MODEL

Is the masterpiece a fraud? The ONE person who *knows* gets shot. Perry must risk *everything* to save a gorgeous model from death!

4 The Case of the BIGAMOUS SPOUSE

Stunning Gwynn Elston begs Perry to protect her when she nearly gulps poison . . . then SHE's nabbed for *First Degree* MURDER!

5 The Case of the SPURIOUS SPINSTER

Perry is plenty puzzled. Two spinsters disappear. But one of them is a phony — and he's got to find *her* before the REAL one *dies!*

6 The Case of the SHAPELY SHADOW

The judge wants a mistrial, favoring Perry. But Perry *doesn't* — even though it would save his client from the DEATH PENALTY!

BIG "3-in-1" Book $9.95 in Publ. Ed.

7 The Case of the MISCHIEVOUS DOLL by Erle Stanley Gardner
Why does pretty Dorrie come *to show Perry her operation?*

8 THE UNQUIET SLEEP by William Haggard
Rachel saw the knife come up, twist suddenly. Then the sharp crack of bone...!

9 THE TARNISHED ANGEL by Hugh Pentecost
5,000 see Willard shot to death. *Why will no one identify the killer?*

Postage Will be Paid by Addressee

No Postage Stamp Necessary If Mailed in the United States

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL
First Class Permit No. 47—Roslyn, N. Y.

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB
Roslyn, L. I.
New York

FILL IN OTHER SIDE OF CARD AND MAIL TODAY